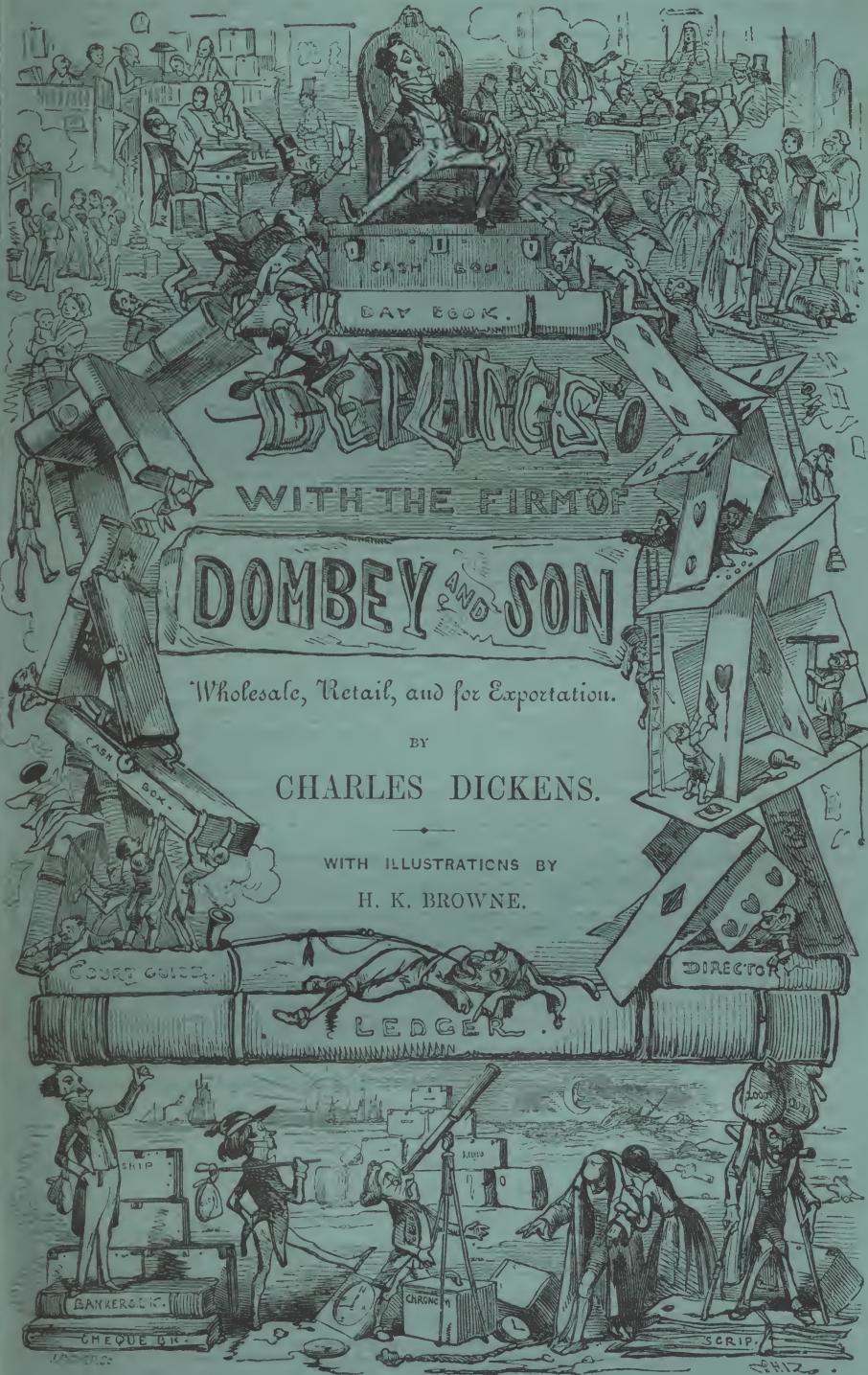


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is to warrant every article of his manufacture, exchange what is defective, or return the money if required, so that his customers may feel perfect confidence, and have what suits them best. He is desirous of having it well understood, that although his establishment presents a large and well-arranged stock of rich and elegant manufactures, still the ordinary articles of utility may be purchased of him cheaper than elsewhere—for instance, the best single-bladed Penknives at 1s. each are warranted; good Scissors at the same price; excellent Toothbrushes 6d. each, and the best silver wire and solid back at 9d. each: good plain mahogany Writing-desks 12s. each; Work-boxes at all prices; six well-finished table Knives and Forks for 6s.; Britannia metal Tea and Coffee Pots; plated on steel and German steel articles all reasonable and good. It may be well to state, that there are plenty of persons in the trade who have imitated articles of *Mecu's* sole invention without being candid enough to acknowledge it, such as his Patent castellated Toothbrushes, his Mechain Dressing-case, his Magic Strop and Paste, and so on. *Mecu* thinks it no more than just to remind his customers of this fact, and to guard them against purchasing, as his articles, purporting to be what they are not, although dearer in price and inferior in quality. Catalogues may be had gratis, 4, Leadenhall Street, London. N.B. The largest and newest stock in London of Papier Mâché Manufactures, such as Note-baskets, Hand-screens, Card-racks, Ink-stands, Blotting-books, Envelope-cases, Desks, Work and Card Boxes, Tables, Chess-boards, Tea-trays, and numerous other articles.

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ONLY some few years have elapsed since DAKIN and COMPY. founded
NUMBER ONE, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD,

during which time Prosperity and Public Favour have attended it.

When they began, they said they would make it "the interest of all who wanted good and pure Teas to purchase from them." That they have done, and continue doing so, must be manifest from the fact, that their business is now, if not the very largest in the Metropolis, most certainly in extent and magnitude surpassed by few.—That "Number One"

HAS MADE RAPID ADVANCES IN THE FAVOUR OF THE PUBLIC
 may in some measure be accounted for, when it is considered that it was based on rectitude and liberality, and had for its object public as well as private advantage.—Another, and

ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL CAUSES

of the great success that has attended "Number One," is the interest so many people have taken in kindly recommending their friends to purchase their Teas and Coffees at Number One, St. Paul's Church Yard, where all buy their Teas with confidence and afterwards drink them with satisfaction.

So anxious are DAKIN and COMPY., that all should be aware of the truth and of the reality of their pretensions that if any course save the one they pursue, namely, that of soliciting a trial, lay open for them, whereby they could *prove* their assertions, they would willingly avail themselves of it; but such not being the case, they can only again request that

THE QUALITY OF THE ARTICLES

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BEAR OUT ALL THAT CAN BE SAID IN THEIR PRAISE.

They sell a quarter of a pound of Tea; and certainly to purchase a quarter of a pound cannot do much harm either way, and will be sufficient to prove how much can be saved, and what a superior article obtained, by patronising the **TEA MERCHANTS**

AT NUMBER ONE, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

Again, for the convenience of those resident in the country

**THE FOLLOWING SAMPLE-PACKAGES WILL BE FORWARDED
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London to its destination, on a receipt of a Post-office Order for £2; 3d. being allowed as the cost of the Post-office Order.

		s. d.	£ s. d.
3 lbs. Finest True Rich Congou Tea	• • •	at 4 6	0 13 6
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1 lb. Finest Tapioca imported	• • •	at 0 8	0 0 8
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2 oz. Finest Brown Nutmegs	• • •	at 8 0	0 1 0
½ lb. Very Best Cayenne Pepper	• • •	at 3 4	0 0 10
			£2 0 3

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NUMBER ONE, SAINT PAUL'S CHURCHYARD,

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F. BROWNE'S INFALLIBLE MODE OF MEASURING THE HEAD.

	As dotted 1 to 1.	Inches.	Eighths
Round the head in manner of a fillet, leaving the Ears loose			
From the Forehead over to the poll, as deep each way as required	As dotted 2 to 2.		

	As marked 3 to 3.		
From one Temple to the other, across the rise or Crown of the head to where the Hair grows			



THE CHARGE FOR THIS UNIQUE HEAD OF HAIR ONLY £1 10s.



Brown 4s. 6d. per bottle,
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10s. per doz. large bottles
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WHICH IS THE BEST FOREIGN BRANDY.

THE PATENT BRANDY, AND THE GENUINE SELTERS WATER, protected by the Patent Metallic Capsule, the only sure and self evident safeguard against adulteration, can be obtained throughout the Kingdom at the respective prices above mentioned, or at 7, SMITHFIELD BARS, AND 96, ST. JOHN'S STREET, LONDON.

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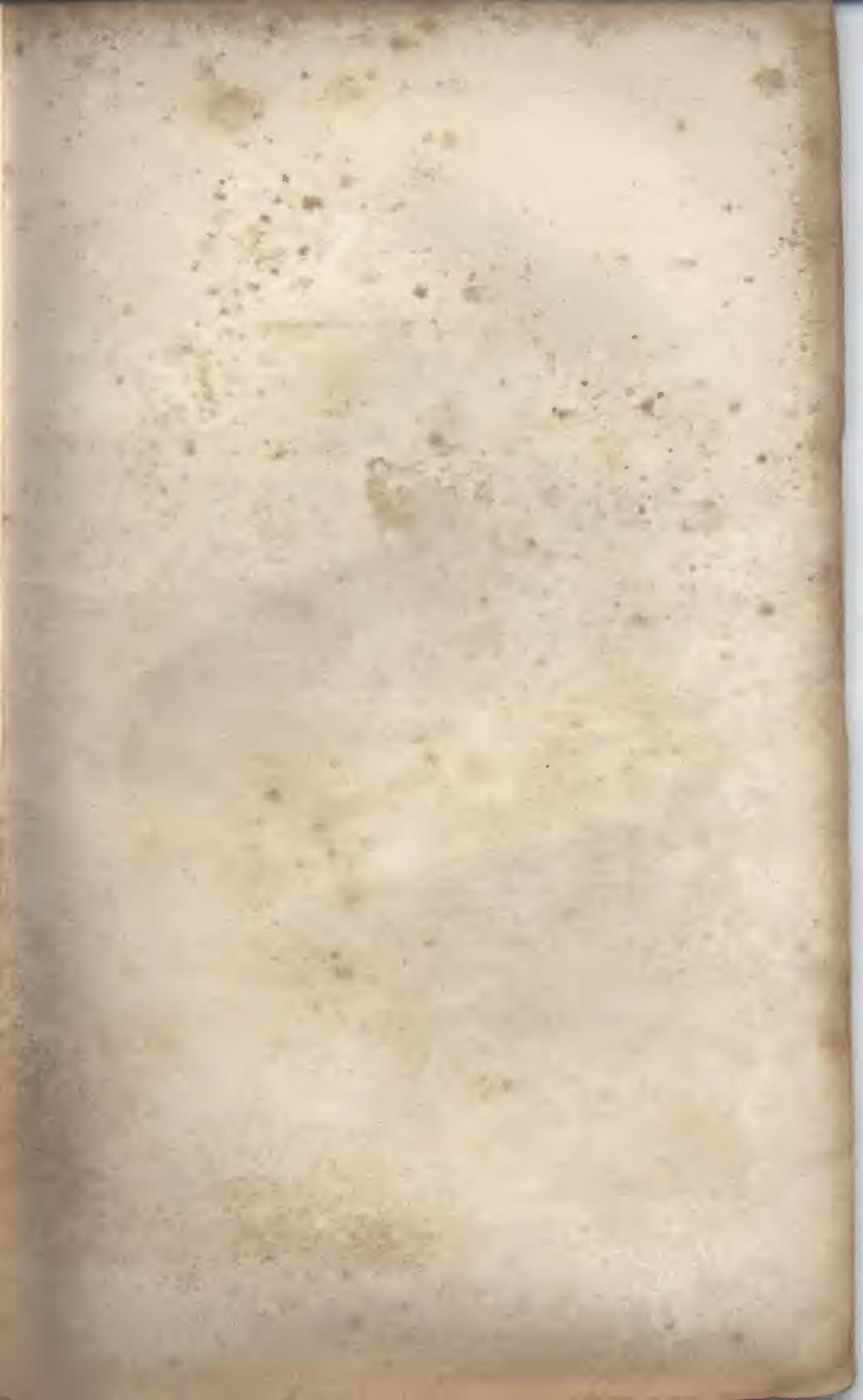
Solicit an inspection of their extensive and varied stock of Fenders, Fire-irons, Candle Lamps, Paper Tea Trays, warranted Table Cutlery, Nickel Silver Wares, and every description of Furnishing Ironmongery, each article marked in plain figures, at prices that will fully convince purchasers of the advantages resulting from cash payments. Their illustrated Book of Prices may be had gratis, or sent free to any part.

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BY DOUDNEY & SON'S NEW TARIFF,
49, LOMBARD STREET. ESTABLISHED 1784.

DRESS COATS, 38s. 42s. and 47s. 6d. Superior workmanship. FROCK COATS, silk facings, 40s. 45s. and 50s. ALL THE NEW PATTERNS for Trousers, 13s. 6d. 17s. 6d. and 21s. SPLENDID PATTERNS SUMMER Trousers, 10s. 6d. per pair, or 3 for 30s. NEW PATTERNS, for Summer Waist-coats, 7s. each, or 3 for 20s. Morning Coats, and Dressing Gowns, Fishing, and SHOOTING COATS, 10s. 6d. 15s. and 21s. An immense assortment of READY-MADE York Wrappers, Taglions, Cordintons, and Chesterfields, 12s. 18s. and 21s. WATERPROOF Cloaks, 21s. DOUDNEY'S celebrated Spanish Army Cloth Cloak, nine-and-a-half yards round, 50s. Extra ditto 25s. SUIT OF LIVERIES, complete, 63s. Scarlet Hunting Coat, 63s. Ladies' Riding Habit, 63s. and 64s. BEST AND CHEAPEST HOUSE FOR BOYS' CLOTHING. COUNTRY GENTLEMEN preferring their Clothes Fashionably made, at a FIRST-RATE LONDON USE, by post-paid Application, they will receive, free of postage, explanatory of their celebrated CONTRACT SYSTEM, Statement of Prices and Directions for Measurement. Or, if Three or Four Gentlemen unite, one of the Travellers will be despatched to wait on them.

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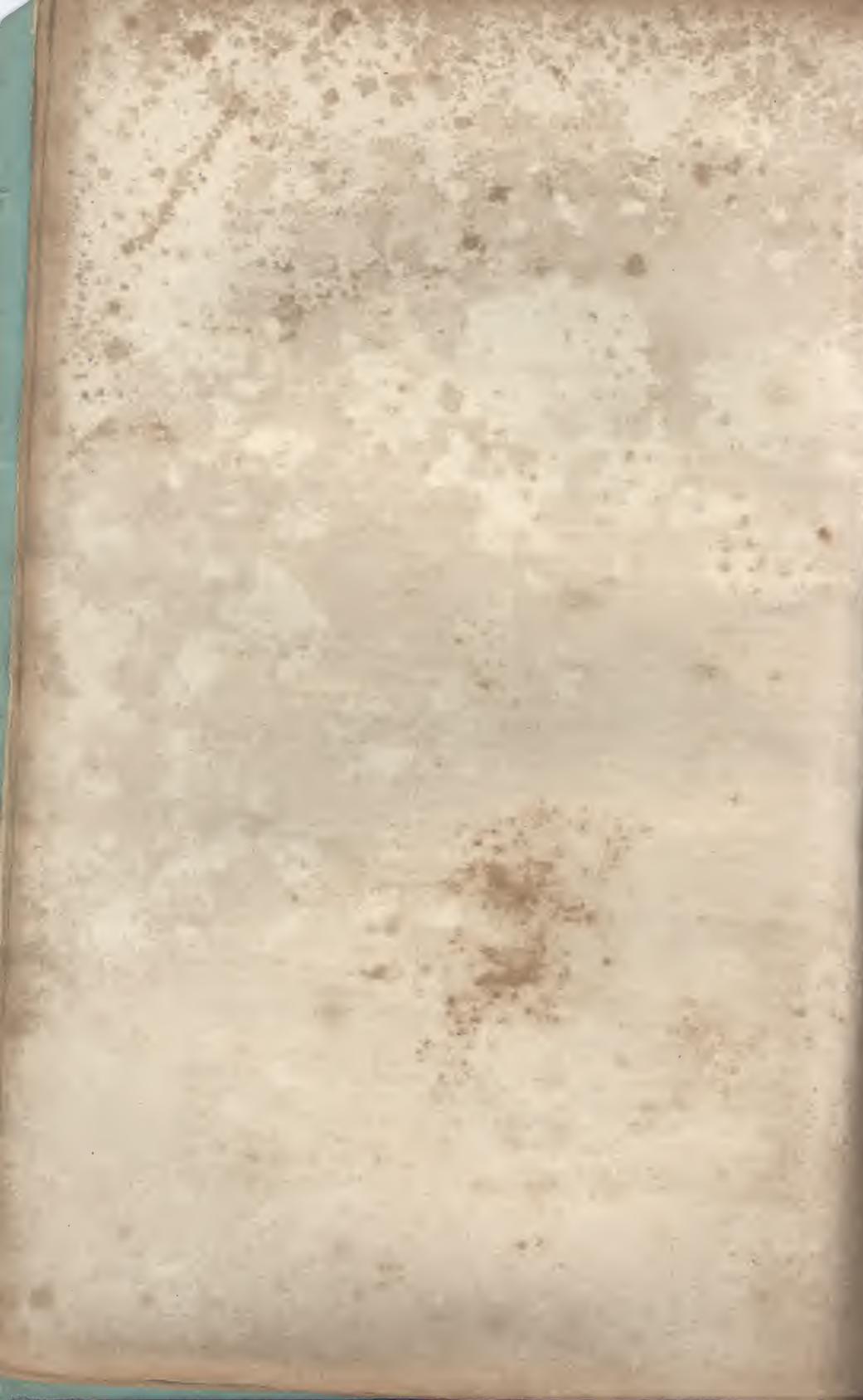




The eyes of Mr. Chick are opened to Lucretia Tax



Coming home from church



CHAPTER XXIX.

THE OPENING OF THE EYES OF MRS. CHICK.

Miss Tox, all unconscious of any such rare appearances in connexion with Mr. Dombey's house, as scaffoldings and ladders, and men with their heads tied up in pocket-handkerchiefs, glaring in at the windows like flying genii or strange birds,—having breakfasted one morning at about this eventful period of time, on her customary viands; to wit, one French roll rasped, one egg new laid (or warranted to be), and one little pot of tea, wherein was infused one little silver scoop-full of that herb on behalf of Miss Tox, and one little silver scoop-full on behalf of the teapot—a flight of fancy in which good housekeepers delight; went up stairs to set forth the bird waltz on the harpsichord, to water and arrange the plants, to dust the nick-nacks, and, according to her daily custom, to make her little drawing-room the garland of Princess's Place.

Miss Tox endued herself with the pair of ancient gloves, like dead leaves, in which she was accustomed to perform these avocations—hidden from human sight at other times in a table drawer—and went methodically to work; beginning with the bird waltz; passing, by a natural association of ideas, to her bird—a very high-shouldered canary, stricken in years, and much rumpled, but a piercing singer, as Princess's Place well knew; taking, next in order, the little china ornaments, paper fly-cages, and so forth; and coming round, in good time, to the plants, which generally required to be snipped here and there with a pair of scissors, for some botanical reason that was very powerful with Miss Tox.

Miss Tox was slow in coming to the plants, this morning. The weather was warm, the wind southerly; and there was a sigh of the summer time in Princess's Place, that turned Miss Tox's thoughts upon the country. The pot-boy attached to the Princess's Arms had come out with a can and trickled water, in a flowing pattern, all over Princess's Place, and it gave the weedy ground a fresh scent—quite a growing scent, Miss Tox said. There was a tiny blink of sun peeping in from the great street round the corner, and the smoky sparrows hopped over it and back again, brightening as they passed: or bathed in it, like a stream, and became glorified sparrows, unconnected with chimneys. Legends in praise of Ginger Beer, with pictorial representations of thirsty customers submerged in the effervesence, or stunned by the flying corks, were conspicuous in the window of the Princess's Arms. They were making late hay, somewhere out of town; and though the fragrance had a long way to come, and many counter fragrances to contend with among the dwellings of the poor (may God reward the worthy gentlemen who stickle for the Plague as part and parcel of the wisdom of our ancestors, and do their little best to keep those dwellings miserable!), yet it was wafted faintly into Princess's Place, whispering of Nature and her wholesome air, as such things will, even

unto prisoners and captives, and those who are desolate and oppressed, in very spite of aldermen and knights to boot: at whose sage nod—and how they nod!—the rolling world stands still!

Miss Tox sat down upon the window-seat, and thought of her good papa deceased—Mr. Tox, of the Customs Department of the public service; and of her childhood, passed at a seaport, among a considerable quantity of cold tar, and some rusticity. She fell into a softened remembrance of meadows, in old time, gleaming with buttercups, like so many inverted firmaments of golden stars; and how she had made chains of dandelion-stalks for youthful vowrs of eternal constancy, dressed chiefly in nankin; and how soon those fetters had withered and broken.

Sitting on the window-seat, and looking out upon the sparrows and the blink of sun, Miss Tox thought likewise of her good mama deceased—sister to the owner of the powdered head and pigtail—of her virtues and her rheumatism. And when a man with bulgy legs, and a rough voice, and a heavy basket on his head that crushed his hat into a mere black muffin, came crying flowers down Princess's Place, making his timid little roots of daisies shudder in the vibration of every yell he gave, as though he had been an ogre, hawking little children, summer recollections were so strong upon Miss Tox, that she shook her head, and murmured she would be comparatively old before she knew it—which seemed likely.

In her pensive mood, Miss Tox's thoughts went wandering on Mr. Dombey's track; probably because the Major had returned home to his lodgings opposite, and had just bowed to her from his window. What other reason could Miss Tox have for connecting Mr. Dombey with her summer days and dandelion fetters? Was he more cheerful? thought Miss Tox. Was he reconciled to the decrees of fate? Would he ever marry again; and if yes, whom? What sort of person now!

A flush—it was warm weather—overspread Miss Tox's face, as, while entertaining these meditations, she turned her head, and was surprised by the reflection of her thoughtful image in the chimney-glass. Another flush succeeded when she saw a little carriage drive into Princess's Place, and make straight for her own door. Miss Tox arose, took up her scissors hastily, and, so coming, at last, to the plants, was very busy with them when Mrs. Chick entered the room.

"How is my sweetest friend!" exclaimed Miss Tox, with open arms.

A little stateliness was mingled with Miss Tox's sweetest friend's demeanour, but she kissed Miss Tox, and said, "Lucretia, thank you, I am pretty well. I hope you are the same. Hem!"

Mrs. Chick was labouring under a peculiar little monosyllabic cough; a sort of primer, or easy introduction to the art of coughing.

"You call very early, and how kind that is, my dear!" pursued Miss Tox. "Now, have you breakfasted?"

"Thank you, Lucretia," said Mrs. Chick, "I have. I took an early breakfast"—the good lady seemed curious on the subject of Princess's Place, and looked all round it as she spoke, "with my brother, who has come home."

"He is better, I trust, my love," faltered Miss Tox.

"He is greatly better, thank you. Hem!"

"My dear Louisa must be careful of that cough," remarked Miss Tox.

"It's nothing," returned Mrs. Chick. "It's merely change of weather. We must expect change."

"Of weather?" asked Miss Tox, in her simplicity.

"Of everything," returned Mrs. Chick. "Of course we must. It's a world of change. Any one would surprise me very much, Lucretia, and would greatly alter my opinion of their understanding, if they attempted to contradict or evade what is so perfectly evident. Change!" exclaimed Mrs. Chick, with severe philosophy. "Why, my gracious me, what is there that does *not* change! even the silkworm, who I am sure might be supposed not to trouble itself about such subjects, changes into all sorts of unexpected things continually."

"My Louisa," said the mild Miss Tox, "is ever happy in her illustrations."

"You are so kind, Lucretia," returned Mrs. Chick, a little softened, "as to say so, and to think so, I believe. I hope neither of us may ever have any cause to lessen our opinion of the other, Lucretia."

"I am sure of it," returned Miss Tox.

Mrs. Chick coughed as before, and drew lines on the carpet with the ivory end of her parasol. Miss Tox, who had experience of her fair friend, and knew that under the pressure of any slight fatigue or vexation she was prone to a discursive kind of irritability, availed herself of the pause, to change the subject.

"Pardon me, my dear Louisa," said Miss Tox, "but have I caught sight of the manly form of Mr. Chick in the carriage?"

"He is there," said Mrs. Chick, "but pray leave him there. He has his newspaper, and would be quite contented for the next two hours. Go on with your flowers, Lucretia, and allow me to sit here and rest."

"My Louisa knows," observed Miss Tox, "that between friends like ourselves, any approach to ceremony would be out of the question. Therefore—" Therefore Miss Tox finished the sentence, not in words but action; and putting on her gloves again, which she had taken off, and arming herself once more with her scissors, began to snip and clip among the leaves with microscopic industry.

"Florence has returned home also," said Mrs. Chick, after sitting silent for some time, with her head on one side, and her parasol sketching on the floor; "and really Florence is a great deal too old now, to continue to lead that solitary life to which she has been accustomed. Of course she is. There can be no doubt about it. I should have very little respect, indeed, for anybody who could advocate a different opinion. Whatever my wishes might be, I *could not* respect them. We cannot command our feelings to such an extent as that."

Miss Tox assented, without being particular as to the intelligibility of the proposition.

"If she's a strange girl," said Mrs. Chick, "and if my brother Paul cannot feel perfectly comfortable in her society, after all the sad things that have happened, and all the terrible disappointments that have been undergone, then, what is the reply? That he must make an effort. That he is bound to make an effort. We have always been a family remarkable for effort. Paul is at the head of the family; almost the only representative of it left—for what am I! I am of no consequence—"

" My dearest love," remonstrated Miss Tox.

Mrs. Chick dried her eyes, which were, for the moment, overflowing; and proceeded :

" And consequently he is more than ever bound to make an effort. And though his having done so, comes upon me with a sort of shock—for mine is a very weak and foolish nature; which is anything but a blessing I am sure; I often wish my heart was a marble slab, or a paving stone—"

" My sweet Louisa," remonstrated Miss Tox, again.

" Still, it is a triumph to me to know that he is so true to himself, and to his name of Dombey; although, of course, I always knew he would be. I only hope," said Mrs. Chick, after a pause, " that she may be worthy of the name too."

Miss Tox filled a little green watering-pot from a jug, and happening to look up when she had done so, was so surprised by the amount of expression Mrs. Chick had conveyed into her face, and was bestowing upon her, that she put the little watering-pot on the table for the present, and sat down near it.

" My dear Louisa," said Miss Tox, " will it be the least satisfaction to you, if I venture to observe in reference to that remark, that I, as a humble individual, think your sweet niece in every way most promising?"

" What do you mean, Lucretia?" returned Mrs. Chick, with increased stateliness of manner. " To what remark of mine, my dear, do you refer?"

" Her being worthy of her name, my love," replied Miss Tox.

" If," said Mrs. Chick, with solemn patience, " I have not expressed myself with clearness, Lucretia, the fault of course is mine. There is, perhaps, no reason why I should express myself at all, except the intimacy that has subsisted between us, and which I very much hope, Lucretia—confidently hope—nothing will occur to disturb. Because, why should I do anything else? There is no reason; it would be absurd. But I wish to express myself clearly, Lucretia; and therefore to go back to that remark, I must beg to say that it was not intended to relate to Florence, in any way."

" Indeed!" returned Miss Tox.

" No," said Mrs. Chick, shortly and decisively.

" Pardon me, my dear," rejoined her meek friend; " but I cannot have understood it. I fear I am dull."

Mrs. Chick looked round the room, and over the way; at the plants, at the bird, at the watering-pot, at almost everything within view, except Miss Tox; and finally dropping her glance upon Miss Tox, for a moment, on its way to the ground, said, looking meanwhile with elevated eyebrows at the carpet :

" When I speak, Lucretia, of her being worthy of the name, I speak of my brother Paul's second wife. I believe I have already said, in effect, if not in the very words I now use, that it is his intention to marry a second wife."

Miss Tox left her seat in a hurry, and returned to her plants; clipping among the stems and leaves, with as little favour as a barber working at so many pauper heads of hair.

"Whether she will be fully sensible of the distinction conferred upon her," said Mrs. Chick, in a lofty tone, "is quite another question. I hope she may be. We are bound to think well of one another in this world, and I hope she may be. I have not been advised with myself. If I had been advised with, I have no doubt my advice would have been cavalierly received, and therefore it is infinitely better as it is. I much prefer it, as it is."

Miss Tox, with head bent down, still clipped among the plants. Mrs. Chick, with energetic shakings of her own head from time to time, continued to hold forth, as if in defiance of somebody.

"If my brother Paul had consulted with me, which he sometimes does—or rather, sometimes used to do; for he will naturally do that no more now, and this is a circumstance which I regard as a relief from responsibility," said Mrs. Chick, hysterically, "for I thank Heaven I am not jealous—" here Mrs. Chick again shed tears: "if my brother Paul had come to me, and had said, 'Louisa, what kind of qualities would you advise me to look out for, in a wife?' I should certainly have answered, 'Paul, you must have family, you must have beauty, you must have dignity, you must have connexion.' Those are the words I should have used. You might have led me to the block immediately afterwards," said Mrs. Chick, as if that consequence were highly probable, "but I should have used them. I should have said, 'Paul! You to marry a second time without family! You to marry without beauty! You to marry without dignity! You to marry without connexion! There is nobody in the world, not mad, who could dream of daring to entertain such a preposterous idea!'"

Miss Tox stopped clipping; and with her head among the plants, listened attentively. Perhaps Miss Tox thought there was hope in this exordium, and the warmth of Mrs. Chick.

"I should have adopted this course of argument," pursued the discreet lady, "because I trust I am not a fool. I make no claim to be considered a person of superior intellect—though I believe some people have been extraordinary enough to consider me so; one so little humoured as I am, would very soon be disabused of any such notion; but I trust I am not a downright fool. And to tell *ME*," said Mrs. Chick with ineffable disdain, "that my brother Paul Dombey could ever contemplate the possibility of uniting himself to anybody—I don't care who"—she was more sharp and emphatic in that short clause than in any other part of her discourse—"not possessing these requisites, would be to insult what understanding I *have* got, as much as if I was to be told that I was born and bred an elephant, which I *may* be told next," said Mrs. Chick, with resignation. "It wouldn't surprise me at all. I expect it."

In the moment's silence that ensued, Miss Tox's scissors gave a feeble clip or two; but Miss Tox's face was still invisible, and Miss Tox's morning gown was agitated. Mrs. Chick looked sideways at her, through the intervening plants; and went on to say, in a tone of bland conviction, and as one dwelling on a point of fact that hardly required to be stated:

"Therefore, of course my brother Paul has done what was to be expected of him, and what anybody might have foreseen he would do, if he entered the marriage state again. I confess it takes me rather by surprise, however gratifying; because when Paul went out of town I had

no idea at all that he would form any attachment out of town, and he certainly had no attachment when he left here. However, it seems to be extremely desirable in every point of view. I have no doubt the mother is a most genteel and elegant creature, and I have no right whatever to dispute the policy of her living with them: which is Paul's affair, not mine—and as to Paul's choice, herself, I have only seen her picture yet, but that is beautiful indeed. Her name is beautiful too," said Mrs. Chick, shaking her head with energy, and arranging herself in her chair; "Edith is at once uncommon, as it strikes me, and distinguished. Consequently, Lucretia, I have no doubt you will be happy to hear that the marriage is to take place immediately—of course, you will:" great emphasis again: "and that you are delighted with this change in the condition of my brother, who has shown you a great deal of pleasant attention at various times."

Miss Tox made no verbal answer, but took up the little watering-pot with a trembling hand, and looked vacantly round as if considering what article of furniture would be improved by the contents. The room door opening at this crisis of Miss Tox's feelings, she started, laughed aloud, and fell into the arms of the person entering; happily insensible alike of Mrs. Chick's indignant countenance, and of the Major at his window over the way, who had his double-barrelled eye-glass in full action, and whose face and figure were dilated with Mephistophelean joy.

Not so the expatriated Native, amazed supporter of Miss Tox's swooning form, who, coming straight up stairs, with a polite inquiry touching Miss Tox's health (in exact pursuance of the Major's malicious instructions), had accidentally arrived in the very nick of time to catch the delicate burden in his arms, and to receive the contents of the little watering-pot in his shoe; both of which circumstances, coupled with his consciousness of being closely watched by the wrathful Major, who had threatened the usual penalty in regard of every bone in his skin in case of any failure, combined to render him a moving spectacle of mental and bodily distress.

For some moments, this afflicted foreigner remained clasping Miss Tox to his heart, with an energy of action in remarkable opposition to his disconcerted face, while that poor lady trickled slowly down upon him the very last sprinklings of the little watering-pot, as if he were a delicate exotic (which indeed he was), and might be almost expected to blow while the gentle rain descended. Mrs. Chick, at length recovering sufficient presence of mind to interpose, commanded him to drop Miss Tox upon the sofa and withdraw; and the exile promptly obeying, she applied herself to promote Miss Tox's recovery.

But none of that gentle concern which usually characterises the daughters of Eve in their tending of each other; none of that freemasonry in fainting, by which they are generally bound together in a mysterious bond of sisterhood; was visible in Mrs. Chick's demeanour. Rather like the executioner who restores the victim to sensation previous to proceeding with the torture (or was wont to do so, in the good old times for which all true men wear perpetual mourning), did Mrs. Chick administer the smelling-bottle, the slapping on the hands, the dashing of cold water on the face, and the other proved remedies. And when, at length, Miss Tox opened her eyes, and gradually became restored to animation and consciousness, Mrs. Chick drew off as from a criminal, and reversing the pre-

cedent of the murdered king of Denmark, regarded her more in anger than in sorrow.

"Lucretia!" said Mrs. Chick. "I will not attempt to disguise what I feel. My eyes are opened, all at once. I wouldn't have believed this, if a Saint had told it to me."

"I am foolish to give way to faintness," Miss Tox faltered. "I shall be better presently."

"You will be better presently, Lucretia!" repeated Mrs. Chick, with exceeding scorn. "Do you suppose I am blind? Do you imagine I am in my second childhood? No, Lucretia! I am obliged to you!"

Miss Tox directed an imploring, helpless kind of look towards her friend, and put her handkerchief before her face.

"If any one had told me this yesterday," said Mrs. Chick with majesty, "or even half-an-hour ago, I should have been tempted, I almost believe, to strike them to the earth. Lucretia Tox, my eyes are opened to you all at once. The scales:" here Mrs. Chick cast down an imaginary pair, such as are commonly used in grocer's shops: "have fallen from my sight. The blindness of my confidence is past, Lucretia. It has been abused and played upon, and evasion is quite out of the question now, I assure you."

"Oh! to what do you allude so cruelly, my love?" asked Miss Tox, through her tears.

"Lucretia," said Mrs. Chick, "ask your own heart. I must entreat you not to address me by any such familiar term as you have just used, if you please. I have some self-respect left, though you may think otherwise."

"Oh, Louisa!" cried Miss Tox. "How can you speak to me like that?"

"How can I speak to you like that?" retorted Mrs. Chick, who, in default of having any particular argument to sustain herself upon, relied principally on such repetitions for her most withering effects. "Like that! You may well say like that, indeed!"

Miss Tox sobbed pitifully.

"The idea!" said Mrs. Chick, "of your having basked at my brother's fireside, like a serpent, and wound yourself, through me, almost into his confidence, Lucretia, that you might, in secret, entertain designs upon him, and dare to aspire to contemplate the possibility of his uniting himself to *you*! Why, it is an idea," said Mrs. Chick, with sarcastic dignity, "the absurdity of which almost relieves its treachery."

"Pray, Louisa," urged Miss Tox, "do not say such dreadful things."

"Dreadful things!" repeated Mrs. Chick. "Dreadful things! Is it not a fact, Lucretia, that you have just now been unable to command your feelings even before me, whose eyes you had so completely closed?"

"I have made no complaint," sobbed Miss Tox. "I have said nothing. If I have been a little overpowered by your news, Louisa, and have ever had any lingering thought that Mr. Dombey was inclined to be particular towards me, surely *you* will not condemn me."

"She is going to say," said Mrs. Chick, addressing herself to the whole of the furniture, in a comprehensive glance of resignation and appeal, "She is going to say—I know it—that I have encouraged her!"

"I don't wish to exchange reproaches, dear Louisa," sobbed Miss Tox "Nor do I wish to complain. But, in my own defence—"

"Yes," cried Mrs. Chick, looking round the room with a prophetic

smile, "that's what she's going to say. I knew it. You had better say it. Say it openly! Be open, Lucretia Tox," said Mrs. Chick, with desperate sternness, "whatever you are."

"In my own defence," faltered Miss Tox, "and only in my own defence against your unkind words, my dear Louisa, I would merely ask you if you haven't often favoured such a fancy, and even said it might happen, for anything we could tell?"

"There is a point," said Mrs. Chick, rising, not as if she were going to stop at the floor, but as if she were about to soar up, high, into her native skies, "beyond which endurance becomes ridiculous, if not culpable. I can bear much; but not too much. What spell was on me when I came into this house this day, I don't know; but I had a presentiment—a dark presentiment," said Mrs. Chick, with a shiver, "that something was going to happen. Well may I have had that foreboding, Lucretia, when my confidence of many years is destroyed in an instant, when my eyes are opened all at once, and when I find you revealed in your true colours. Lucretia, I have been mistaken in you. It is better for us both that this subject should end here. I wish you well, and I shall ever wish you well. But, as an individual who desires to be true to herself in her own poor position, whatever that position may be, or may not be—and as the sister of my brother—and as the sister-in-law of my brother's wife—and as a connexion by marriage of my brother's wife's mother—may I be permitted to add, as a Dombey?—I can wish you nothing else but good morning."

These words, delivered with cutting suavity, tempered and chastened by a lofty air of moral rectitude, carried the speaker to the door. There she inclined her head in a ghostly and statue-like manner, and so withdrew to her carriage, to seek comfort and consolation in the arms of Mr. Chick, her lord.

Figuratively speaking, that is to say; for the arms of Mr. Chick were full of his newspaper. Neither did that gentleman address his eyes towards his wife otherwise than by stealth. Neither did he offer any consolation whatever. In short, he sat reading, and humming fag ends of tunes, and sometimes glancing furtively at her without delivering himself of a word, good, bad, or indifferent.

In the meantime Mrs. Chick sat swelling and bridling, and tossing her head, as if she were still repeating that solemn formula of farewell to Lucretia Tox. At length, she said aloud, 'Oh the extent to which her eyes had been opened that day!'

"To which your eyes have been opened, my dear!" repeated Mr. Chick.

"Oh, don't talk to me!" said Mrs. Chick. "If you can bear to see me in this state, and not ask me what the matter is, you had better hold your tongue for ever."

"What *is* the matter, my dear?" asked Mr. Chick.

"To think," said Mrs. Chick, in a state of soliloquy, "that she should ever have conceived the base idea of connecting herself with our family by a marriage with Paul! To think that when she was playing at horses with that dear child who is now in his grave—I never liked it at the time—she should have been hiding such a double-faced design! I wonder she was never afraid that something would happen to her. She is fortunate if nothing does."

"I really thought, my dear," said Mr. Chick slowly, after rubbing the bridge of his nose for some time with his newspaper, "that you had gone on the same tack yourself, all along, until this morning ; and had thought it would be a convenient thing enough, if it could have been brought about."

Mrs. Chick instantly burst into tears, and told Mr. Chick that if he wished to trample upon her with his boots, he had better do it.

"But with Lucretia Tox I have done," said Mrs. Chick, after abandoning herself to her feelings for some minutes, to Mr. Chick's great terror. "I can bear to resign Paul's confidence in favour of one who, I hope and trust, may be deserving of it, and with whom he has a perfect right to replace poor Fanny if he chooses ; I can bear to be informed, in Paul's cool manner, of such a change in his plans, and never to be consulted until all is settled and determined ; but deceit I can *not* bear, and with Lucretia Tox I have done. It is better as it is," said Mrs. Chick, piously ; "much better. It would have been a long time before I could have accommodated myself comfortably with her, after this ; and I really don't know, as Paul is going to be very grand, and these are people of condition, that she would have been quite presentable, and might not have compromised myself. There's a providence in everything ; everything works for the best ; I have been tried to-day, but, upon the whole, I don't regret it."

In which Christian spirit, Mrs. Chick dried her eyes, and smoothed her lap, and sat as became a person calm under a great wrong. Mr. Chick, feeling his unworthiness no doubt, took an early opportunity of being set down at a street corner and walking away, whistling, with his shoulders very much raised, and his hands in his pockets.

While poor excommunicated Miss Tox, who, if she were a fawner and toad-eater, was at least an honest and a constant one, and had ever borne a faithful friendship towards her impeacher, and had been truly absorbed and swallowed up in devotion to the magnificence of Mr. Dombey—while poor excommunicated Miss Tox watered her plants with her tears, and felt that it was winter in Princess's Place.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE INTERVAL BEFORE THE MARRIAGE.

ALTHOUGH the enchanted house was no more, and the working world had broken into it, and was hammering and crashing and tramping up and down stairs all day long, keeping Diogenes in an incessant paroxysm of barking, from sunrise to sunset—evidently convinced that his enemy had got the better of him at last, and was then sacking the premises in triumphant defiance—there was, at first, no other great change in the method of Florence's life. At night, when the workpeople went away, the house was dreary and deserted again ; and Florence, listening to their voices echoing through the hall and staircase as they departed, pictured to herself the cheerful homes to which they were returning, and the children

who were waiting for them, and was glad to think that they were merry and well pleased to go.

She welcomed back the evening silence as an old friend, but it came now with an altered face, and looked more kindly on her. Fresh hope was in it. The beautiful lady who had soothed and caressed her, in the very room in which her heart had been so wrung, was a spirit of promise to her. Soft shadows of the bright life dawning, when her father's affection should be gradually won, and all, or much should be restored, of what she had lost on the dark day when a mother's love had faded with a mother's last breath on her cheek, moved about her in the twilight and were welcome company. Peeping at the rosy children her neighbours, it was a new and precious sensation to think that they might soon speak together and know each other; when she would not fear, as of old, to show herself before them, lest they should be grieved to see her in her black dress sitting there alone!

In her thoughts of her new mother, and in the love and trust overflowing her pure heart towards her, Florence loved her own dead mother more and more. She had no fear of setting up a rival in her breast. The new flower sprang from the deep-planted and long-cherished root, she knew. Every gentle word that had fallen from the lips of the beautiful lady, sounded to Florence like an echo of the voice long hushed and silent. How could she love that memory less for living tenderness, when it was her memory of all parental tenderness and love!

Florence was, one day, sitting reading in her room, and thinking of the lady and her promised visit soon—for her book turned on a kindred subject—when, raising her eyes, she saw her standing in the doorway.

“Mama!” cried Florence, joyfully meeting her. “Come again!”

“Not Mama yet,” returned the lady, with a serious smile, as she encircled Florence's neck with her arm.

“But very soon to be,” cried Florence.

“Very soon now, Florence: very soon.”

Edith bent her head a little, so as to press the blooming cheek of Florence against her own, and for some few moments remained thus silent. There was something so very tender in her manner, that Florence was even more sensible of it than on the first occasion of their meeting.

She led Florence to a chair beside her, and sat down: Florence looking in her face, quite wondering at its beauty, and willingly leaving her hand in hers.

“Have you been alone, Florence, since I was here last?”

“Oh yes!” smiled Florence, hastily.

She hesitated and cast down her eyes; for her new mama was very earnest in her look, and the look was intently and thoughtfully fixed upon her face.

“I—I—am used to be alone,” said Florence. “I don't mind it at all. Di and I pass whole days together, sometimes.” Florence might have said, whole weeks, and months.

“Is Di your maid, love?”

“My dog, Mama,” said Florence, laughing. “Susan is my maid.”

“And these are your rooms,” said Edith, looking round. “I was not shown these rooms the other day. We must have them improved, Florence. They shall be made the prettiest in the house.”

"If I might change them, Mama," returned Florence; "there is one up-stairs I should like much better."

"Is this not high enough, dear girl?" asked Edith, smiling.

"The other was my brother's room," said Florence, "and I am very fond of it. I would have spoken to Papa about it when I came home, and found the workmen here, and everything changing; but—"

Florence dropped her eyes, lest the same look should make her falter again.

"—but I was afraid it might distress him; and as you said you would be here again soon, Mama, and are the mistress of everything, I determined to take courage and ask you."

Edith sat looking at her, with her brilliant eyes intent upon her face, until Florence raising her own, she, in her turn, withdrew her gaze, and turned it on the ground. It was then that Florence thought how different this lady's beauty was, from what she had supposed. She had thought it of a proud and lofty kind; yet her manner was so subdued and gentle, that if she had been of Florence's own age and character, it scarcely could have invited confidence more.

Except when a constrained and singular reserve crept over her; and then she seemed (but Florence hardly understood this, though she could not choose but notice it, and think about it) as if she were humbled before Florence, and ill at ease. When she had said that she was not her Mama yet, and when Florence had called her the mistress of everything there, this change in her was quick and startling; and now, while the eyes of Florence rested on her face, she sat as though she would have shrunk and hidden from her, rather than as one about to love and cherish her, in right of such a near connexion.

She gave Florence her ready promise, about her new room, and said she would give directions about it herself. She then asked some questions concerning poor Paul; and when they had sat in conversation for some time, told Florence she had come to take her to her own home.

"We have come to London now, my mother and I," said Edith, "and you shall stay with us until I am married. I wish that we should know and trust each other, Florence."

"You are very kind to me," said Florence, "dear Mama. How much I thank you!"

"Let me say now, for it may be the best opportunity," continued Edith, looking round to see that they were quite alone, and speaking in a lower voice, "that when I am married, and have gone away for some weeks, I shall be easier at heart if you will come home here. No matter who invites you to stay elsewhere. Come home here. It is better to be alone than—what I would say is," she added, checking herself, "that I know well you are best at home, dear Florence."

"I will come home on the very day, Mama."

"Do so. I rely on that promise. Now, prepare to come with me, dear girl. You will find me down stairs when you are ready."

Slowly and thoughtfully did Edith wander alone through the mansion of which she was so soon to be the lady: and little heed took she of all the elegance and splendour it began to display. The same indomitable haughtiness of soul, the same proud scorn expressed in eye and lip, the same fierce beauty, only tamed by a sense of its own little worth, and

of the little worth of everything around it, went through the grand saloons and halls, that had got loose among the shady trees, and raged and rent themselves. The mimic roses on the walls and floors were set round with sharp thorns, that tore her breast; in every scrap of gold so dazzling to the eye, she saw some hateful atom of her purchase-money; the broad high mirrors showed her, at full length, a woman with a noble quality yet dwelling in her nature, who was too false to her better self, and too debased and lost, to save herself. She believed that all this was so plain more or less, to all eyes, that she had no resource or power of self-assertion but in pride: and with this pride, which tortured her own heart night and day, she fought her fate out, braved it, and defied it.

Was this the woman whom Florence—an innocent girl, strong only in her earnestness and simple truth—could so impress and quell, that by her side she was another creature, with her tempest of passion hushed, and her very pride itself subdued? Was this the woman who now sat beside her in a carriage, with their arms entwined, and who, while she courted and entreated her to love and trust her, drew her fair head to nestle on her breast, and would have laid down life to shield it from wrong or harm?

Oh, Edith! it were well to die, indeed, at such a time! Better and happier far, perhaps, to die so, Edith, than to live on to the end!

The Honourable Mrs. Skewton, who was thinking of anything rather than of such sentiments—for, like many genteel persons who have existed at various times, she set her face against death altogether, and objected to the mention of any such low and levelling upstart—had borrowed a house in Brook-street, Grosvenor-square, from a stately relative (one of the Feenix brood), who was out of town, and who did not object to lending it, in the handsomest manner, for nuptial purposes, as the loan implied his final release and acquittance from all further loans and gifts to Mrs. Skewton and her daughter. It being necessary for the credit of the family to make a handsome appearance at such a time, Mrs. Skewton, with the assistance of an accommodating tradesman resident in the parish of Mary-le-bone, who lent out all sorts of articles to the nobility and gentry, from a service of plate to an army of footmen, clapped into this house a silver-headed butler (who was charged extra on that account, as having the appearance of an ancient family retainer), two very tall young men in livery, and a select staff of kitchen-servants; so that a legend arose, down stairs, that Withers the page, released at once from his numerous household duties, and from the propulsion of the wheeled-chair (inconsistent with the metropolis), had been several times observed to rub his eyes and pinch his limbs, as if he misdoubted his having overslept himself at the Leamington milkman's, and being still in a celestial dream. A variety of requisites in plate and china being also conveyed to the same establishment from the same convenient source, with several miscellaneous articles, including a neat chariot and a pair of bays, Mrs. Skewton cushioned herself on the principal sofa, in the Cleopatra attitude, and held her court in fair state.

“And how,” said Mrs. Skewton, on the entrance of her daughter and her charge, “is my charming Florence? You must come and kiss me, Florence, if you please, my love.”

Florence was timidly stooping to pick out a place in the white part of

Mrs. Skewton's face, when that lady presented her ear, and relieved her of her difficulty.

"Edith, my dear," said Mrs. Skewton, "positively, I—stand a little more in the light, my sweetest Florence, for a moment."

Florence blushingly complied.

"You don't remember, dearest Edith," said her mother, "what you were when you were about the same age as our exceedingly precious Florence, or a few years younger?"

"I have long forgotten, mother."

"For positively, my dear," said Mrs. Skewton, "I do think that I see a decided resemblance to what you were then, in our extremely fascinating young friend. And it shows," said Mrs. Skewton, in a lower voice, which conveyed her opinion that Florence was in a very unfinished state, "what cultivation will do."

"It does, indeed," was Edith's stern reply.

Her mother eyed her sharply for a moment, and feeling herself on unsafe ground, said, as a diversion:

"My charming Florence, you must come and kiss me once more, if you please, my love."

Florence complied, of course, and again imprinted her lips on Mrs. Skewton's ear.

"And you have heard, no doubt, my darling pet," said Mrs. Skewton, detaining her hand, "that your Papa, whom we all perfectly adore and dote upon, is to be married to my dearest Edith this day week."

"I knew it would be very soon," returned Florence, "but not exactly when."

"My darling Edith," urged her mother, gaily, "is it possible you have not told Florence?"

"Why should I tell Florence?" she returned, so suddenly and harshly, that Florence could scarcely believe it was the same voice.

Mrs. Skewton then told Florence, as another and safer diversion, that her father was coming to dinner, and that he would no doubt be charmingly surprised to see her; as he had spoken last night of dressing in the city, and had known nothing of Edith's design, the execution of which, according to Mrs. Skewton's expectation, would throw him into a perfect ecstasy. Florence was troubled to hear this; and her distress became so keen, as the dinner-hour approached, that if she had known how to frame an entreaty to be suffered to return home, without involving her father in her explanation, she would have hurried back on foot, bareheaded, breathless, and alone, rather than incur the risk of meeting his displeasure.

As the time drew nearer, she could hardly breathe. She dared not approach a window, lest he should see her from the street. She dared not go up stairs to hide her emotion, lest, in passing out at the door, she should meet him unexpectedly; besides which dread, she felt as though she never could come back again if she were summoned to his presence. In this conflict of her fears, she was sitting by Cleopatra's couch, endeavouring to understand and to reply to the bald discourse of that lady, when she heard his foot upon the stair.

"I hear him now!" cried Florence, starting. "He is coming!"

Cleopatra, who in her juvenility was always playfully disposed, and who in her self-engrossment did not trouble herself about the nature of

this agitation, pushed Florence behind her couch, and dropped a shawl over her, preparatory to giving Mr. Dombey a rapture of surprise. It was so quickly done, that in a moment Florence heard his awful step in the room.

He saluted his intended mother-in-law, and his intended bride. The strange sound of his voice thrilled through the whole frame of his child.

"My dear Dombey," said Cleopatra, "come here and tell me how your pretty Florence is."

"Florence is very well," said Mr. Dombey, advancing towards the couch.

"At home?"

"At home," said Mr. Dombey.

"My dear Dombey," returned Cleopatra, with bewitching vivacity; "Now are you sure you are not deceiving me? I don't know what my dearest Edith will say to me when I make such a declaration, but upon my honour I am afraid you are the falsest of men, my dear Dombey."

Though he had been; and had been detected, on the spot, in the most enormous falsehood that was ever said or done; he could hardly have been more disconcerted than he was, when Mrs. Skewton plucked the shawl away, and Florence, pale and trembling, rose before him like a ghost. He had not yet recovered his presence of mind, when Florence had run up to him, clasped her hands round his neck, kissed his face, and hurried out of the room. He looked round as if to refer the matter to somebody else, but Edith had gone after Florence, instantly.

"Now, confess, my dear Dombey," said Mrs. Skewton, giving him her hand, "that you never were more surprised and pleased in your life."

"I never was more surprised," said Mr. Dombey.

"Nor pleased, my dearest Dombey?" returned Mrs. Skewton, holding up her fan.

"I—yes, I am exceedingly glad to meet Florence here," said Mr. Dombey. He appeared to consider gravely about it for a moment, and then said, more decidedly, "Yes, I really am very glad indeed to meet Florence here."

"You wonder how she comes here?" said Mrs. Skewton, "don't you?"

"Edith, perhaps—" suggested Mr. Dombey.

"Ah! wicked guesser!" replied Cleopatra, shaking her head. "Ah! cunning, cunning man! One shouldn't tell these things; your sex, my dear Dombey, are so vain, and so apt to abuse our weaknesses; but, you know my open soul—very well; immediately."

This was addressed to one of the very tall young men who announced dinner.

"But Edith, my dear Dombey," she continued in a whisper, "when she cannot have you near her—and as I tell her, she cannot expect that always—will at least have near her something or somebody belonging to you. Well, how extremely natural that is! And in this spirit, nothing would keep her from riding off to-day to fetch our darling Florence. Well, how excessively charming that is!"

As she waited for an answer, Mr. Dombey answered, "Eminently so."

"Bless you, my dear Dombey, for that proof of heart!" cried Cleopatra, squeezing his hand. "But I am growing too serious! Take me

down stairs like an angel, and let us see what these people intend to give us for dinner. Bless you, dear Dombey!"

Cleopatra skipping off her couch with tolerable briskness, after the last benediction, Mr. Dombey took her arm in his and led her ceremoniously down stairs; one of the very tall young men on hire, whose organ of veneration was imperfectly developed, thrusting his tongue into his cheek, for the entertainment of the other very tall young man on hire, as the couple turned into the dining-room.

Florence and Edith were already there, and sitting side by side. Florence would have risen when her father entered, to resign her chair to him; but Edith openly put her hand upon her arm, and Mr. Dombey took an opposite place at the round table.

The conversation was almost entirely sustained by Mrs. Skewton. Florence hardly dared to raise her eyes, lest they should reveal the traces of tears; far less dared to speak; and Edith never uttered one word, unless in answer to a question. Verily, Cleopatra worked hard, for the establishment that was so nearly clutched; and verily it should have been a rich one to reward her!

"And so your preparations are nearly finished at last, my dear Dombey?" said Cleopatra, when the dessert was put upon the table, and the silver-headed butler had withdrawn. "Even the lawyers' preparations!"

"Yes, madam," replied Mr. Dombey; "the deed of settlement, the professional gentlemen inform me, is now ready, and as I was mentioning to you, Edith has only to do us the favour to suggest her own time for its execution."

Edith sat, like a handsome statue; as cold, as silent, and as still.

"My dearest love," said Cleopatra, "do you hear what Mr. Dombey says? Ah, my dear Dombey!" aside to that gentleman, "How her absence, as the time approaches, reminds me of the days, when that most agreeable of creatures, her Papa, was in your situation!"

"I have nothing to suggest. It shall be when you please," said Edith, scarcely looking over the table at Mr. Dombey.

"To-morrow?" suggested Mr. Dombey.

"If you please."

"Or would next day," said Mr. Dombey, "suit your engagements better?"

"I have no engagements. I am always at your disposal. Let it be when you like."

"No engagements, my dear Edith!" remonstrated her mother, "when you are in a most terrible state of flurry all day long, and have a thousand and one appointments with all sorts of tradespeople!"

"They are of your making," returned Edith, turning on her with a slight contraction of her brow. "You and Mr. Dombey can arrange between you."

"Very true, indeed, my love, and most considerate of you!" said Cleopatra. "My darling Florence, you must really come and kiss me once more, if you please, my dear!"

Singular coincidence, that these gushes of interest in Florence hurried Cleopatra away from almost every dialogue in which Edith had a share, however trifling! Florence had certainly never undergone so much embracing, and perhaps had never been, unconsciously, so useful in her life.

Mr. Dombey was far from quarrelling, in his own breast, with the manner of his beautiful betrothed. He had that good reason for sympathy with haughtiness and coldness, which is found in a fellow-feeling. It flattered him to think how these deferred to him, in Edith's case, and seemed to have no will apart from his. It flattered him to picture to himself, this proud and stately woman doing the honours of his house, and chilling his guests after his own manner. The dignity of Dombey and Son would be heightened and maintained, indeed, in such hands.

So thought Mr. Dombey, when he was left alone at the dining-table, and mused upon his past and future fortunes: finding no uncongeniality in an air of scant and gloomy state that pervaded the room, in colour a dark brown, with black hatchments of pictures blotching the walls, and twenty-four black chairs, with almost as many nails in them as so many coffins, waiting like mutes, upon the threshold of the Turkey carpet; and two exhausted negroes holding up two withered branches of candelabra on the side-board, and a musty smell prevailing as if the ashes of ten thousand dinners were entombed in the sarcophagus below it. The owner of the house lived much abroad; the air of England seldom agreed long with a member of the Feenix family; and the room had gradually put itself into deeper and still deeper mourning for him, until it was become so funereal as to want nothing but a body in it to be quite complete.

No bad representation of the body, for the nonce, in his unbending form, if not in his attitude, Mr. Dombey looked down into the cold depths of the dead sea of mahogany on which the fruit dishes and decanters lay at anchor; as if the subjects of his thoughts were rising towards the surface one by one, and plunging down again. Edith was there in all her majesty of brow and figure; and close to her came Florence, with her timid head turned to him, as it had been, for an instant, when she left the room; and Edith's eyes upon her, and Edith's hand put out protectingly. A little figure in a low arm-chair came springing next into the light, and looked upon him wonderingly, with its bright eyes and its old-young face gleaming as in the flickering of an evening fire. Again came Florence close upon it, and absorbed his whole attention. Whether as a fore-doomed difficulty and disappointment to him; whether as a rival who had crossed him in his way, and might again; whether as his child, of whom, in his successful wooing, he could stoop to think, as claiming, at such a time, to be no more estranged; or whether as a hint to him that the mere appearance of caring for his own blood should be maintained in his new relations; he best knew. Indifferently well, perhaps, at best; for marriage company and marriage altars, and ambitious scenes—still blotted here and there with Florence—always Florence—turned up so fast, and so confusedly, that he rose, and went up stairs to escape them.

It was quite late at night before candles were brought; for at present they made Mrs. Skewton's head ache, she complained; and in the meantime Florence and Mrs. Skewton talked together (Cleopatra being very anxious to keep her close to herself), or Florence touched the piano softly for Mrs. Skewton's delight; to make no mention of a few occasions in the course of the evening, when that affectionate lady was impelled to solicit another kiss, and which always happened after Edith had said anything. They were not many, however, for Edith sat apart by an open window during the whole time (in spite of her mother's fears that she would

take cold), and remained there until Mr. Dombey took leave. He was serenely gracious to Florence when he did so; and Florence went to bed in a room within Edith's, so happy and hopeful, that she thought of her late self as if it were some other poor deserted girl who was to be pitied for her sorrow; and in her pity, sobbed herself to sleep.

The week fled fast. There were drives to milliners, dress-makers, jewellers, lawyers, florists, pastry-cooks; and Florence was always of the party. Florence was to go to the wedding. Florence was to cast off her mourning, and to wear a brilliant dress on the occasion. The milliner's intentions on the subject of this dress—the milliner was a Frenchwoman, and greatly resembled Mrs. Skewton—were so chaste and elegant, that Mrs. Skewton bespoke one like it for herself. The milliner said it would become her to admiration, and that all the world would take her for the young lady's sister.

The week fled faster. Edith looked at nothing and cared for nothing. Her rich dresses came home, and were tried on, and were loudly commended by Mrs. Skewton and the milliners, and were put away without a word from her. Mrs. Skewton made their plans for every day, and executed them. Sometimes Edith sat in the carriage when they went to make purchases; sometimes, when it was absolutely necessary, she went into the shops. But Mrs. Skewton conducted the whole business, whatever it happened to be; and Edith looked on as uninterested and with as much apparent indifference as if she had no concern in it. Florence might perhaps have thought she was haughty and listless, but that she was never so to her. So Florence quenched her wonder in her gratitude whenever it broke out, and soon subdued it.

The week fled faster. It had nearly winged its flight away. The last night of the week, the night before the marriage, was come. In the dark room—for Mrs. Skewton's head was no better yet, though she expected to recover permanently to-morrow—were that lady, Edith, and Mr. Dombey. Edith was at her open window looking out into the street; Mr. Dombey and Cleopatra were talking softly on the sofa. It was growing late; and Florence being fatigued, had gone to bed.

"My dear Dombey," said Cleopatra, "you will leave me Florence to-morrow, when you deprive me of my sweetest Edith."

Mr. Dombey said he would, with pleasure.

"To have her about me, here, while you are both at Paris, and to think that, at her age, I am assisting in the formation of her mind, my dear Dombey," said Cleopatra, "will be a perfect balm to me in the extremely shattered state to which I shall be reduced."

Edith turned her head suddenly. Her listless manner was exchanged, in a moment, to one of burning interest, and, unseen in the darkness, she attended closely to their conversation.

Mr. Dombey would be delighted to leave Florence in such admirable guardianship.

"My dear Dombey," returned Cleopatra, "a thousand thanks for your good opinion. I feared you were going, with malice aforethought, as the dreadful lawyers say—those horrid proses!—to condemn me to utter solitude."

"Why do me so great an injustice, my dear madam?" said Mr. Dombey.

"Because my charming Florence tells me so positively she must go home to-morrow," returned Cleopatra, "that I began to be afraid, my dearest Dombey, you were quite a Bashaw."

"I assure you, madam!" said Mr. Dombey, "I have laid no commands on Florence; and if I had, there are no commands like your wish."

"My dear Dombey," replied Cleopatra, "what a courtier you are! Though I'll not say so, either; for courtiers have no heart, and yours pervades your charming life and character. And are you really going so early, my dear Dombey!"

Oh, indeed! it was late, and Mr. Dombey feared he must.

"Is this a fact, or is it all a dream?" lisped Cleopatra. "Can I believe, my dearest Dombey, that you are coming back to-morrow morning to deprive me of my sweet companion; my own Edith?"

Mr. Dombey, who was accustomed to take things literally, reminded Mrs. Skewton that they were to meet first at the church.

"The pang," said Mrs. Skewton, "of consigning a child, even to you, my dear Dombey, is one of the most excruciating imaginable; and combined with a naturally delicate constitution, and the extreme stupidity of the pastry-cook who has undertaken the breakfast, is almost too much for my poor strength. But I shall rally, my dear Dombey, in the morning; do not fear for me, or be uneasy on my account: Heaven bless you! My dearest Edith!" she cried archly. "Somebody is going, pet."

Edith, who had turned her head again towards the window, and whose interest in their conversation had ceased, rose up in her place, but made no advance towards him, and said nothing. Mr. Dombey, with a lofty gallantry adapted to his dignity and the occasion, betook his creaking boots towards her, put her hand to his lips, said, "To-morrow morning I shall have the happiness of claiming this hand as Mrs. Dombey's," and bowed himself solemnly out.

Mrs. Skewton rang for candles as soon as the house-door had closed upon him. With the candles appeared her maid, with the juvenile dress that was to delude the world to-morrow. The dress had savage retribution in it, as such dresses ever have, and made her infinitely older and more hideous than her greasy flannel gown. But Mrs. Skewton tried it on with mincing satisfaction; smirked at her cadaverous self in the glass, as she thought of its killing effect upon the Major; and suffering her maid to take it off again, and to prepare her for repose, tumbled into ruins like a house of painted cards.

All this time, Edith remained at the dark window looking out into the street. When she and her mother were at last left alone, she moved from it for the first time that evening, and came opposite to her. The yawning, shaking, peevish figure of the mother, with her eyes raised to confront the proud erect form of the daughter, whose glance of fire was bent downward upon her, had a conscious air upon it, that no levity or temper could conceal.

"I am tired to death," said she. "You can't be trusted for a moment. You are worse than a child. Child! No child would be half so obstinate and undutiful."

"Listen to me, mother," returned Edith, passing these words by with

a scorn that would not descend to trifle with them. "You must remain alone here until I return."

"Must remain alone here, Edith, until you return!" repeated her mother.

"Or in that name upon which I shall call to-morrow to witness what I do, so falsely, and so shamefully, I swear I will refuse the hand of this man in the church. If I do not, may I fall dead upon the pavement!"

The mother answered with a look of quick alarm, in no degree diminished by the look she met.

"It is enough," said Edith, steadily, "that we are what we are. I will have no youth and truth dragged down to my level. I will have no guileless nature undermined, corrupted, and perverted, to amuse the leisure of a world of mothers. You know my meaning. Florence must go home."

"You are an idiot, Edith," cried her angry mother. "Do you expect there can ever be peace for you in that house, till she is married, and away?"

"Ask me, or ask yourself, if I ever expect peace in that house," said her daughter, "and you know the answer."

"And am I to be told to-night, after all my pains and labour, and when you are going, through me, to be rendered independent," her mother almost shrieked in her passion, while her palsied head shook like a leaf, "that there is corruption and contagion in me, and that I am not fit company for a girl! What are you, pray? What are you?"

"I have put the question to myself," said Edith, ashy pale, and pointing to the window, "more than once when I have been sitting there, and something in the faded likeness of my sex has wandered past outside; and God knows I have met with my reply. Oh mother, mother, if you had but left me to my natural heart when I too was a girl—a younger girl than Florence—how different I might have been!"

Sensible that any show of anger was useless here, her mother restrained herself, and fell a whimpering, and bewailed that she had lived too long, and that her only child had cast her off, and that duty towards parents was forgotten in these evil days, and that she had heard unnatural taunts, and cared for life no longer.

"If one is to go on living through continual scenes like this," she whined, "I am sure it would be much better for me to think of some means of putting an end to my existence. Oh! The idea of your being my daughter, Edith, and addressing me in such a strain!"

"Between us, mother," returned Edith, mournfully, "the time for mutual reproaches is past."

"Then why do you revive it?" whimpered her mother. "You know that you are lacerating me in the cruellest manner. You know how sensitive I am to unkindness. At such a moment too, when I have so much to think of, and am naturally anxious to appear to the best advantage! I wonder at you, Edith. To make your mother a fright upon your wedding-day!"

Edith bent the same fixed look upon her, as she sobbed and rubbed her eyes; and said in the same low steady voice, which had neither risen nor fallen since she first addressed her, "I have said that Florence must go home."

"Let her go!" cried the afflicted and affrighted parent, hastily. "I am sure I am willing she should go. What is the girl to me?"

"She is so much to me, that rather than communicate, or suffer to be communicated to her, one grain of the evil that is in my breast, mother, I would renounce you, as I would (if you gave me cause) renounce him in the church to-morrow," replied Edith. "Leave her alone. She shall not, while I can interpose, be tampered with and tainted by the lessons I have learned. This is no hard condition on this bitter night."

"If you had proposed it in a filial manner, Edith," whined her mother, "perhaps not; very likely not. But such extremely cutting words—"

"They are past and at an end between us, now," said Edith. "Take your own way, mother; share as you please in what you have gained; spend, enjoy, make much of it; and be as happy as you will. The object of our lives is won. Henceforth let us wear it silently. My lips are closed upon the past, from this hour. I forgive you your part in to-morrow's wickedness. May God forgive my own!"

Without a tremor in her voice, or frame, and passing onward with a foot that set itself upon the neck of every soft emotion, she bade her mother good night, and repaired to her own room.

But not to rest; for there was no rest in the tumult of her agitation when alone. To and fro, and to and fro, and to and fro again, five hundred times, among the splendid preparations for her adornment on the morrow; with her dark hair shaken down, her dark eyes flashing with a raging light, her broad white bosom red with the cruel grasp of the relentless hand with which she spurned it from her, pacing up and down with an averted head, as if she would avoid the sight of her own fair person, and divorce herself from its companionship. Thus, in the dead time of the night before her bridal, Edith Granger wrestled with her unquiet spirit, fearless, friendless, silent, proud, and uncomplaining.

At length it happened that she touched the open door which led into the room where Florence lay.

She started, stopped, and looked in.

A light was burning there, and showed her Florence in her bloom of innocence and beauty, fast asleep. Edith held her breath, and felt herself drawn on towards her.

Drawn nearer, nearer, nearer yet; at last, drawn so near, that stooping down, she pressed her lips to the gentle hand that lay outside the bed, and put it softly to her neck. Its touch was like the prophet's rod of old, upon the rock. Her tears sprung forth beneath it, as she sunk upon her knees, and laid her aching head and streaming hair upon the pillow by its side.

Thus Edith Granger passed the night before her bridal. Thus the sun found her on her bridal morning.

CHAPTER XXXI.

* THE WEDDING.

DAWN, with its passionless blank face, steals shivering to the church beneath which lies the dust of little Paul and his mother, and looks in at the windows. It is cold and dark. Night crouches yet, upon the pavement, and broods, sombre and heavy, in nooks and corners of the building. The steeple-clock, perched up above the houses, emerging from beneath another of the countless ripples in the tide of time that regularly roll and break on the eternal shore, is greyly visible, like a stone beacon, recording how the sea flows on ; but within doors, dawn, at first, can only peep at night, and see that it is there.

Hovering feebly round the church, and looking in, dawn moans and weeps for its short reign, and its tears trickle on the window-glass, and the trees against the church-wall bow their heads, and wring their many hands in sympathy. Night, growing pale before it, gradually fades out of the church, but lingers in the vaults below, and sits upon the coffins. And now comes bright day, burnishing the steeple-clock, and reddening the spire, and drying up the tears of dawn, and stifling its complaining ; and the scared dawn, following the night, and chasing it from its last refuge, shrinks into the vaults itself and hides, with a frightened face, among the dead, until night returns, refreshed, to drive it out.

And now, the mice, who have been busier with the prayer-books than their proper owners, and with the hassocks, more worn by their little teeth than by human knees, hide their bright eyes in their holes, and gather close together in affright at the resounding clashing of the church-door. For the beadle, that man of power, comes early this morning with the sexton ; and Mrs. Miff, the wheezy little pew-opener—a mighty dry old lady, sparingly dressed, with not an inch of fulness anywhere about her—is also here, and has been waiting at the church-gate half-an-hour, as her place is, for the beadle.

A vinegary face has Mrs. Miff, and a mortified bonnet, and eke a thirsty soul for sixpences and shillings. Beckoning to stray people to come into pews, has given Mrs. Miff an air of mystery ; and there is reservation in the eye of Mrs. Miff, as always knowing of a softer seat, but having her suspicions of the fee. There is no such fact as Mr. Miff, nor has there been, these twenty years, and Mrs. Miff would rather not allude to him. He held some bad opinions, it would seem, about free-seats ; and though Mrs. Miff hopes he may be gone upwards, she couldn't positively undertake to say so.

Busy is Mrs. Miff this morning at the church-door, beating and dusting the altar cloth, the carpet, and the cushions ; and much has Mrs. Miff to say, about the wedding they are going to have. Mrs. Miff is told, that the new furniture and alterations in the house cost full five thousand pound if

they cost a penny ; and Mrs. Miff has heard, upon the best authority, that the lady hasn't got a sixpence wherewithal to bless herself. Mrs. Miff remembers, likewise, as if it had happened yesterday, the first wife's funeral, and then the christening, and then the other funeral ; and Mrs. Miff says, by-the-bye she'll soap-and-water that 'ere tablet presently, against the company arrive. Mr. Sownds the Beadle, who is sitting in the sun upon the church steps all this time (and seldom does anything else, except, in cold weather, sitting by the fire), approves of Mrs. Miff's discourse, and asks if Mrs. Miff has heard it said, that the lady is uncommon handsome ? The information Mrs. Miff has received, being of this nature, Mr. Sownds the Beadle, who, though orthodox and corpulent, is still an admirer of female beauty, observes, with unctious, yes, he hears she is a spanker—an expression that seems somewhat forcible to Mrs. Miff, or would, from any lips but those of Mr. Sownds the Beadle.

In Mr. Dombey's house, at this same time, there is great stir and bustle, more especially among the women: not one of whom has had a wink of sleep since four o'clock, and all of whom were full dressed before six. Mr. Towlinson is an object of greater consideration than usual to the housemaid, and the cook says at breakfast-time that one wedding makes many, which the housemaid can't believe, and don't think true at all. Mr. Towlinson reserves his sentiments on this question ; being rendered something gloomy by the engagement of a foreigner with whiskers (Mr. Towlinson is whiskerless himself), who has been hired to accompany the happy pair to Paris, and who is busy packing the new chariot. In respect of this personage, Mr. Towlinson admits, presently, that he never knew of any good that ever came of foreigners ; and being charged by the ladies with prejudice, says, look at Bonaparte who was at the head of 'em, and see what *he* was always up to ! Which the housemaid says is very true.

The pastry-cook is hard at work in the funeral room in Brook-street, and the very tall young men are busy looking on. One of the very tall young men already smells of sherry, and his eyes have a tendency to become fixed in his head, and to stare at objects without seeing them. The very tall young man is conscious of this failing in himself; and informs his comrade that it's his "exciseman." The very tall young man would say excitement, but his speech is hazy.

The men who play the bells, have got scent of the marriage ; and the marrow-bones and cleavers too ; and a brass band too. The first, are practising in a back settlement near Battlebridge ; the second, put themselves in communication, through their chief, with Mr. Towlinson, to whom they offer terms to be bought off ; and the third, in the person of an artful trombone, lurks and dodges round the corner, waiting for some traitor tradesman to reveal the place and hour of breakfast, for a bribe. Expectation and excitement extend further yet, and take a wider range. From Balls Pond, Mr. Perch brings Mrs. Perch to spend the day with Mr. Dombey's servants, and accompany them, surreptitiously, to see the wedding. In Mr. Toots's lodgings, Mr. Toots attires himself as if he were at least the Bridegroom : determined to behold the spectacle in splendour from a secret corner of the gallery, and thither to convey the Chicken: for it is Mr. Toots's desperate intent to point out Florence to

the Chicken, then and there, and openly to say, "Now, Chicken, I will not deceive you any longer; the friend I have sometimes mentioned to you is myself; Miss Dombey is the object of my passion; what are your opinions, Chicken, in this state of things, and what, on the spot, do you advise?" The so-much-to-be-astonished Chicken, in the meanwhile, dips his beak into a tankard of strong beer, in Mr. Toots's kitchen, and pecks up two pounds of beefsteaks. In Princess's Place, Miss Tox is up and doing; for she too, though in sore distress, is resolved to put a shilling in the hands of Mrs. Miff, and see the ceremony which has a cruel fascination for her, from some lonely corner. The quarters of the Wooden Midshipman are all alive; for Captain Cuttle, in his ankle-jacks and with a huge shirt-collar, is seated at his breakfast, listening to Rob the Grinder as he reads the marriage service to him beforehand, under orders, to the end that the Captain may perfectly understand the solemnity he is about to witness: for which purpose, the Captain gravely lays injunctions on his chaplain, from time to time, to "pat about," or to "overhaul that 'ere article again," or to stick to his own duty, and leave the Amens to him, the Captain: one of which he repeats, whenever a pause is made by Rob the Grinder, with sonorous satisfaction.

Besides all this, and much more, twenty nursery maids in Mr. Dombey's street alone, have promised twenty families of little women, whose instinctive interest in nuptials dates from their cradles, that they shall go and see the marriage. Truly, Mr. Sownds the Beadle has good reason to feel himself in office, as he suns his portly figure on the church steps, waiting for the marriage hour. Truly, Mrs. Miff has cause to pounce on an unlucky dwarf child, with a giant baby, who peeps in at the porch, and drive her forth with indignation!

Cousin Feenix has come over from abroad, expressly to attend the marriage. Cousin Feenix was a man about town, forty years ago: but he is still so juvenile in figure and in manner, and so well got up, that strangers are amazed when they discover latent wrinkles in his lordship's face, and crows' feet in his eyes; and first observe him, not exactly certain when he walks across a room, of going quite straight to where he wants to go. But Cousin Feenix, getting up at half-past seven o'clock or so, is quite another thing from Cousin Feenix got up; and very dim, indeed, he looks, while being shaved at Long's Hotel, in Bond-street.

Mr. Dombey leaves his dressing-room, amidst a general whisking away of the women on the staircase, who disperse in all directions, with a great rustling of skirts, except Mrs. Perch, who, being (but that she always is) in an interesting situation, is not nimble, and is obliged to face him, and is ready to sink with confusion as she curtseys;—may Heaven avert all evil consequences from the house of Perch! Mr. Dombey walks up to the drawing-room, to bide his time. Gorgeous are Mr. Dombey's new blue coat, fawn-coloured pantaloons, and lilac waistcoat; and a whisper goes about the house, that Mr. Dombey's hair is curled.

A double knock announces the arrival of the Major, who is gorgeous too, and wears a whole geranium in his button-hole, and has his hair curled tight and crisp, as well the Native knows.

"Dombey!" says the Major, putting out both hands, "How are you?"

"Major," says Mr. Dombey, "how are You!"

"By Jove, Sir," says the Major, "Joey B. is in such case this morning, Sir,"—and here he hits himself hard upon the breast—"in such case this morning, Sir, that, damme, Dombey, he has half a mind to make a double marriage of it, Sir, and take the mother."

Mr. Dombey smiles; but faintly, even for him; for Mr. Dombey feels that he is going to be related to the mother, and that, under those circumstances, she is not to be joked about.

"Dombey," says the Major, seeing this, "I give you joy. I congratulate you, Dombey. By the Lord, Sir," says the Major, "you are more to be envied, this day, than any man in England!"

Here again, Mr. Dombey's assent is qualified; because he is going to confer a great distinction on a lady; and, no doubt, she is to be envied most.

"As to Edith Granger, Sir," pursues the Major, "there is not a woman in all Europe but might—and would, Sir, you will allow Bagstock to add—and would—give her ears, and her ear-rings, too, to be in Edith Granger's place."

"You are good enough to say so, Major," says Mr. Dombey.

"Dombey," returns the Major, "you know it. Let us have no false delicacy. You know it. Do you know it, or do you not, Dombey?" says the Major, almost in a passion.

"Oh, really, Major—"

"Damme, Sir," retorts the Major, "do you know that fact, or do you not? Dombey! Is old Joe your friend? Are we on that footing of unreserved intimacy, Dombey, that may justify a man—a blunt old Joseph B., Sir—in speaking out; or am I to take open order, Dombey, and to keep my distance, and to stand on forms?"

"My dear Major Bagstock," says Mr. Dombey, with a gratified air, "you are quite warm."

"By Gad, Sir," says the Major, "I am warm. Joseph B. does not deny it, Dombey. He is warm. This is an occasion, Sir, that calls forth all the honest sympathies remaining in an old, infernal, battered, used-up, invalided, J. B. carcase. And I tell you what, Dombey—at such a time a man must blurt out what he feels, or put a muzzle on; and Joseph Bagstock tells you to your face, Dombey, as he tells his club behind your back, that he never will be muzzled when Paul Dombey is in question. Now, damme, Sir," concludes the Major, with great firmness, "what do you make of that?"

"Major," says Mr. Dombey, "I assure you that I am really obliged to you. I had no idea of checking your too partial friendship."

"Not too partial, Sir!" exclaims the choleric Major. "Dombey, I deny it!"

"Your friendship I will say then," pursues Mr. Dombey, "on any account. Nor can I forget, Major, on such an occasion as the present, how much I am indebted to it."

"Dombey," says the Major, with appropriate action, "that is the hand of Joseph Bagstock: of plain old Joey B., Sir, if you like that better! That is the hand, of which His Royal Highness the late Duke of York did me the honour to observe, Sir, to his Royal Highness the late Duke of Kent, that it was the hand of Josh.: a rough and tough, and possibly

an up-to-snuff, old vagabond. Dombey, may the present moment be the least unhappy of our lives. God bless you!"

Now, enters Mr. Carker, gorgeous likewise, and smiling like a wedding-guest indeed. He can scarcely let Mr. Dombey's hand go, he is so congratulatory; and he shakes the Major's hand so heartily at the same time, that his voice shakes too, in accord with his arms, as it comes sliding from between his teeth.

"The very day is auspicious," says Mr. Carker. "The brightest and most genial weather! I hope I am not a moment late?"

"Punctual to your time, Sir," says the Major.

"I am rejoiced, I am sure," says Mr. Carker. "I was afraid I might be a few seconds after the appointed time, for I was delayed by a procession of wagons; and I took the liberty of riding round to Brook-street"—this to Mr. Dombey—"to leave a few poor rarities of flowers for Mrs. Dombey. A man in my position, and so distinguished as to be invited here, is proud to offer some homage in acknowledgment of his vassalage: and as I have no doubt Mrs. Dombey is overwhelmed with what is costly and magnificent;" with a strange glance at his patron; "I hope the very poverty of my offering, may find favour for it."

"Mrs. Dombey, that is to be," returns Mr. Dombey, condescendingly, "will be very sensible of your attention, Carker, I am sure."

"And if she is to be Mrs. Dombey this morning, Sir," says the Major, putting down his coffee-cup, and looking at his watch, "it's high time we were off!"

Forth, in a barouche, ride Mr. Dombey, Major Bagstock, and Mr. Carker to the church. Mr. Sownds the Beadle has long risen from the steps, and is in waiting with his cocked hat in his hand. Mrs. Miff curtseys and proposes chairs in the vestry. Mr. Dombey prefers remaining in the church. As he looks up at the organ, Miss Tox in the gallery shrinks behind the fat leg of a cherubim on a monument, with cheeks like a young Wind. Captain Cuttle, on the contrary, stands up and waves his hook, in token of welcome and encouragement. Mr. Toots informs the Chicken, behind his hand, that the middle gentleman, he in the fawn-coloured pantaloons, is the father of his love. The Chicken hoarsely whispers Mr. Toots that he's as stiff a cove as ever he see, but that it is within the resources of Science to double him up, with one blow in the waistcoat.

Mr. Sownds and Mrs. Miff are eyeing Mr. Dombey from a little distance, when the noise of approaching wheels is heard, and Mr. Sownds goes out. Mrs. Miff, meeting Mr. Dombey's eye as it is withdrawn from the presumptuous maniac up-stairs, who salutes him with so much urbanity, drops a curtsey, and informs him that she believes his "good lady" is come. Then, there is a crowding and a whispering at the door, and the good lady enters, with a haughty step.

There is no sign upon her face, of last night's suffering; there is no trace in her manner, of the woman on the bended knees, reposing her wild head, in beautiful abandonment, upon the pillow of the sleeping girl. That girl, all gentle and lovely, is at her side—a striking contrast to her own disdainful and defiant figure, standing there, composed, erect, in-scrutable of will, resplendent and majestic in the zenith of its charms, yet beating down, and treading on, the admiration that it challenges.

There is a pause while Mr. Sownds the Beadle glides into the vestry for the clergyman and clerk. At this juncture, Mrs. Skewton speaks to Mr. Dombey: more distinctly and emphatically than her custom is, and moving, at the same time, close to Edith.

"My dear Dombey," says the good Mama, "I fear I must relinquish darling Florence after all, and suffer her to go home, as she herself proposed. After my loss of to-day, my dear Dombey, I feel I shall not have spirits, even for her society."

"Had she not better stay with you?" returns the Bridegroom.

"I think not, my dear Dombey. No, I think not. I shall be better alone. Besides, my dearest Edith will be her natural and constant guardian when you return, and I had better not encroach upon her trust, perhaps. She might be jealous. Eh, dear Edith?"

The affectionate Mama presses her daughter's arm, as she says this; perhaps entreating her attention earnestly.

"To be serious, my dear Dombey," she resumes, "I will relinquish our dear child, and not inflict my gloom upon her. We have settled that, just now. She fully understands, dear Dombey. Edith, my dear,—she fully understands."

Again, the good mother presses her daughter's arm. Mr. Dombey offers no additional remonstrance; for the clergyman and clerk appear; and Mrs. Miff, and Mr. Sownds the Beadle, group the party in their proper places at the altar rails.

"Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?"

Cousin Feenix does that. He has come from Baden-Baden on purpose. "Confound it," Cousin Feenix says—good-natured creature, Cousin Feenix—"when we *do* get a rich city fellow into the family, let us show him some attention; let us do something for him."

"I give this woman to be married to this man," saith Cousin Feenix therefore. Cousin Feenix, meaning to go in a straight line, but turning off sideways by reason of his wilful legs, gives the wrong woman to be married to this man, at first—to wit, a bridesmaid of some condition, distantly connected with the family, and ten years Mrs. Skewton's junior—but Mrs. Miff, interposing her mortified bonnet, dexterously turns him back, and runs him, as on castors, full at the "good lady:" whom Cousin Feenix giveth to be married to this man accordingly.

And will they in the sight of heaven—?

Aye, that they will: Mr. Dombey says he will. And what says Edith? *She* will.

So, from that day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do them part, they plight their troth to one another, and are married.

In a firm, free hand, the Bride subscribes her name in the register, when they adjourn to the vestry. "There an't a many ladies comes here," Mrs. Miff says with a curtsey—to look at Mrs. Miff, at such a season, is to make her mortified bonnet go down with a dip—"writes their names like this good lady!" Mr. Sownds the Beadle thinks it is a truly spanking signature, and worthy of the writer—this, however, between himself and conscience.

Florence signs too, but unapplauded, for her hand shakes. All the

party sign ; Cousin Feenix last ; who puts his noble name into a wrong place, and enrols himself as having been born, that morning.

The Major now salutes the Bride right gallantly, and carries out that branch of military tactics in reference to all the ladies : notwithstanding Mrs. Skewton's being extremely hard to kiss, and squeaking shrilly in the sacred edifice. The example is followed by Cousin Feenix, and even by Mr. Dombey. Lastly, Mr. Carker, with his white teeth glistening, approaches Edith, more as if he meant to bite her, than to taste the sweets that linger on her lips.

There is a glow upon her proud cheek, and a flashing in her eyes, that may be meant to stay him ; but it does not, for he salutes her as the rest have done, and wishes her all happiness.

“ If wishes,” says he in a low voice, “ are not superfluous, applied to such a union.”

“ I thank you, Sir,” she answers, with a curled lip, and a heaving bosom.

But, does Edith feel still, as on the night when she knew that Mr. Dombey would return to offer his alliance, that Carker knows her thoroughly, and reads her right, and that she is more degraded by his knowledge of her, than by aught else ? Is it for this reason that her haughtiness shrinks beneath his smile, like snow within the hand that grasps it firmly, and that her imperious glance droops in meeting his, and seeks the ground ?

“ I am proud to see,” says Mr. Carker, with a servile stooping of his neck, which the revelations making by his eyes and teeth proclaim to be a lie, “ I am proud to see that my humble offering is graced by Mrs. Dombey’s hand, and permitted to hold so favoured a place in so joyful an occasion.”

Though she bends her head, in answer, there is something in the momentary action of her hand, as if she would crush the flowers it holds, and fling them, with contempt, upon the ground. But, she puts the hand through the arm of her new husband, who has been standing near, conversing with the Major, and is proud again, and motionless, and silent.

The carriages are once more at the church door. Mr. Dombey, with his bride upon his arm, conducts her through the twenty families of little women who are on the steps, and every one of whom remembers the fashion and the colour of her every article of dress from that moment, and reproduces it on her doll, who is for ever being married. Cleopatra and Cousin Feenix enter the same carriage. The Major hands into a second carriage, Florence, and the bridesmaid who so narrowly escaped being given away by mistake, and then enters it himself, and is followed by Mr. Carker. Horses prance and caper ; coachmen and footmen shine in fluttering favours, flowers, and new-made liveries. Away they dash and rattle through the streets ; and as they pass along, a thousand heads are turned to look at them, and a thousand sober moralists revenge themselves for not being married too, that morning, by reflecting that these people little think such happiness can’t last.

Miss Tox emerges from behind the cherubim’s leg, when all is quiet, and comes slowly down, from the gallery. Miss Tox’s eyes are red, and

her pocket-handkerchief is damp. She is wounded, but not exasperated, and she hopes they may be happy. She quite admits to herself the beauty of the bride, and her own comparatively feeble and faded attractions; but the stately image of Mr. Dombey in his lilac waistcoat, and his fawn-coloured pantaloons, is present to her mind, and Miss Tox weeps afresh, behind her veil, on her way home to Princess's Place. Captain Cuttle, having joined in all the amens and responses, with a devout growl, feels much improved by his religious exercises; and in a peaceful frame of mind pervades the body of the church, glazed hat in hand, and reads the tablet to the memory of little Paul. The gallant Mr. Toots, attended by the faithful Chicken, leaves the building in torments of love. The Chicken is as yet unable to elaborate a scheme for winning Florence, but his first idea has gained possession of him, and he thinks the doubling up of Mr. Dombey would be a move in the right direction. Mr. Dombey's servants come out of their hiding-places, and prepare to rush to Brook Street, when they are delayed by symptoms of indisposition on the part of Mrs. Perch, who entreats a glass of water, and becomes alarming; Mrs. Perch gets better soon, however, and is borne away; and Mrs. Miff, and Mr. Sownds the Beadle, sit upon the steps to count what they have gained by the affair, and talk it over, while the sexton tolls a funeral.

Now, the carriages arrive at the Bride's residence, and the players on the bells begin to jingle, and the band strikes up, and Mr. Punch, that model of connubial bliss, salutes his wife. Now, the people run, and push, and press round in a gaping throng, while Mr. Dombey, leading Mrs. Dombey by the hand, advances solemnly into the Feenix Halls. Now, the rest of the wedding party alight, and enter after them. And why does Mr. Carker, passing through the people to the hall-door, think of the old woman who called to him in the grove that morning? Or why does Florence, as she passes, think, with a tremble, of her childhood, when she was lost, and of the visage of good Mrs. Brown?

Now, there are more congratulations on this happiest of days, and more company, though not much; and now they leave the drawing-room, and range themselves at table in the dark-brown dining-room, which no confectioner can brighten up, let him garnish the exhausted negroes with as many flowers and love-knots as he will.

The pastry-cook has done his duty like a man, though, and a rich breakfast is set forth. Mr. and Mrs. Chick have joined the party, among others. Mrs. Chick admires that Edith should be, by nature, such a perfect Dombey; and is affable and confidential to Mrs. Skewton, whose mind is relieved of a great load, and who takes her share of the champagne. The very tall young man who suffered from excitement early, is better; but a vague sentiment of repentance has seized upon him, and he hates the other very tall young man, and wrests dishes from him by violence, and takes a grim delight in disobliging the company. The company are cool and calm, and do not outrage the black hatchments of pictures looking down upon them, by any excess of mirth. Cousin Feenix and the Major are the gayest there; but Mr. Carker has a smile for the whole table. He has an especial smile for the Bride, who very, very, seldom meets it.

Cousin Feenix rises, when the company have breakfasted, and the

servants have left the room ; and wonderfully young he looks, with his white wristbands almost covering his hands (otherwise rather bony), and the bloom of the champagne in his cheeks.

“ Upon my honour,” says Cousin Feenix, “ although it’s an unusual sort of thing in a private gentleman’s house, I must beg leave to call upon you to drink what is usually called a—in fact a toast.”

The Major very hoarsely indicates his approval. Mr. Carker, bending his head forward over the table in the direction of Cousin Feenix, smiles and nods a great many times.

“ A—in fact it’s not a—” Cousin Feenix beginning again, thus, comes to a dead stop.

“ Hear, hear ! ” says the Major, in a tone of conviction.

Mr. Carker softly claps his hands, and bending forward over the table again, smiles and nods a great many more times than before, as if he were particularly struck by this last observation, and desired personally to express his sense of the good it has done him.

“ It is,” says Cousin Feenix, “ an occasion, in fact, when the general usages of life may be a little departed from, without impropriety ; and although I never was an orator in my life, and when I was in the House of Commons, and had the honour of seconding the address, was—in fact, was laid up for a fortnight with the consciousness of failure—”

The Major and Mr. Carker are so much delighted by this fragment of personal history, that Cousin Feenix laughs, and addressing them, individually, goes on to say :

“ And in point of fact, when I was devilish ill—still, you know, I feel that a duty devolves upon me. And when a duty devolves upon an Englishman, he is bound to get out of it, in my opinion, in the best way he can. Well ! our family has had the gratification, to-day, of connecting itself, in the person of my lovely and accomplished relative, whom I now see—in point of fact, present—”

Here there is general applause.

“ Present,” repeats Cousin Feenix, feeling that it is a neat point which will bear repetition,—“ with one who—that is to say, with a man, at whom the finger of scorn can never—in fact, with my honourable friend Dombey, if he will allow me to call him so.”

Cousin Feenix bows to Mr. Dombey ; Mr. Dombey solemnly returns the bow ; everybody is more or less gratified and affected by this extraordinary, and perhaps unprecedented, appeal to the feelings.

“ I have not,” says Cousin Feenix, “ enjoyed those opportunities which I could have desired, of cultivating the acquaintance of my friend Dombey, and studying those qualities which do equal honour to his head, and, in point of fact, to his heart ; for it has been my misfortune to be, as we used to say in my time in the House of Commons, when it was not the custom to allude to the Lords, and when the order of parliamentary proceedings was perhaps better observed than it is now—to be in—in point of fact,” says Cousin Feenix, cherishing his joke, with great slyness, and finally bringing it out with a jerk, “ in another place ! ”

The Major falls into convulsions, and is recovered with difficulty.

“ But I know sufficient of my friend Dombey,” resumes Cousin Feenix in a graver tone, as if he had suddenly become a sadder and a wiser man,

“to know that he is, in point of fact, what may be emphatically called a—a merchant—a British merchant—and a—and a man. And although I have been resident abroad, for some years (it would give me great pleasure to receive my friend Dombey, and everybody here, at Baden-Baden, and to have an opportunity of making ‘em known to the Grand Duke), still I know enough, I flatter myself, of my lovely and accomplished relative, to know that she possesses every requisite to make a man happy, and that her marriage with my friend Dombey is one of inclination and affection on both sides.”

Many smiles and nods from Mr. Carker.

“Therefore,” says Cousin Feenix, “I congratulate the family of which I am a member, on the acquisition of my friend Dombey. I congratulate my friend Dombey on his union with my lovely and accomplished relative who possesses every requisite to make a man happy; and I take the liberty of calling on you all, in point of fact, to congratulate both my friend Dombey and my lovely and accomplished relative, on the present occasion.”

The speech of Cousin Feenix is received with great applause, and Mr. Dombey returns thanks on behalf of himself and Mrs. Dombey. J. B. shortly afterwards proposes Mrs. Skewton. The breakfast languishes when that is done, the violated hatchments are avenged, and Edith rises to assume her travelling dress.

All the servants, in the meantime, have been breakfasting below. Champagne has grown too common among them to be mentioned, and roast fowls, raised pies, and lobster salad, have become mere drugs. The very tall young man has recovered his spirits, and again alludes to the exciseman. His comrade’s eye begins to emulate his own, and he, too, stares at objects, without taking cognizance thereof. There is a general redness in the faces of the ladies; in the face of Mrs. Perch particularly, who is joyous and beaming, and lifted so far above the cares of life, that if she were asked just now to direct a wayfarer to Ball’s Pond, where her own cares lodge, she would have some difficulty in recalling the way. Mr. Towlinson has proposed the happy pair; to which the silver-headed butler has responded neatly, and with emotion; for he half begins to think he *is* an old retainer of the family, and that he is bound to be affected by these changes. The whole party, and especially the ladies, are very frolicsome. Mr. Dombey’s cook, who generally takes the lead in society, has said, it is impossible to settle down after this, and why not go, in a party, to the play? Everybody (Mrs. Perch included) has agreed to this; even the Native, who is tigerish in his drink, and who alarms the ladies (Mrs. Perch particularly) by the rolling of his eyes. One of the very tall young men has even proposed a ball after the play, and it presents itself to no one (Mrs. Perch included) in the light of an impossibility. Words have arisen between the housemaid and Mr. Towlinson; she, on the authority of an old saw, asserting marriages to be made in Heaven: he, affecting to trace the manufacture elsewhere; he, supposing that she says so, because she thinks of being married her own self: she, saying, Lord forbid, at any rate, that she should ever marry *him*. To calm these flying taunts, the silver-headed butler rises to propose the health of Mr. Towlinson, whom to know is to esteem, and to esteem is to wish well settled in life with the object of his choice, wherever (here the silver-headed butler

eyes (the housemaid) she may be. Mr. Towlinson returns thanks in a speech replete with feeling, of which the peroration turns on foreigners, regarding whom, he says they may find favour, sometimes, with weak and inconstant intellects that can be led away by hair, but all he hopes, is, he may never hear of no foreigner never boning nothing out of no travelling chariot. The eye of Mr. Towlinson is so severe and so expressive here, that the housemaid is turning hysterical, when she and all the rest, roused by the intelligence that the Bride is going away, hurry up stairs to witness her departure.

The chariot is at the door; the Bride is descending to the hall, where Mr. Dombey waits for her. Florence is ready on the staircase to depart too; and Miss Nipper, who has held a middle state between the parlour and the kitchen, is prepared to accompany her. As Edith appears, Florence hastens towards her, to bid her farewell.

Is Edith cold, that she should tremble! Is there anything unnatural or unwholesome in the touch of Florence, that the beautiful form recedes and contracts, as if it could not bear it! Is there so much hurry in this going away, that Edith, with a wave of her hand, sweeps on, and is gone!

Mrs. Skewton, overpowered by her feelings as a mother, sinks on her sofa in the Cleopatra attitude, when the clatter of the chariot wheels is lost, and sheds several tears. The Major, coming with the rest of the company from table, endeavours to comfort her; but she will not be comforted on any terms, and so the Major takes his leave. Cousin Feenix takes his leave, and Mr. Carker takes his leave. The guests all go away. Cleopatra, left alone, feels a little giddy from her strong emotion, and falls asleep.

Giddiness prevails below stairs too. The very tall young man whose excitement came on so soon, appears to have his head glued to the table in the pantry, and cannot be detached from it. A violent revulsion has taken place in the spirits of Mrs. Perch, who is low on account of Mr. Perch, and tells cook that she fears he is not so much attached to his home, as he used to be, when they were only nine in family. Mr. Towlinson has a singing in his ears and a large wheel going round and round inside his head. The housemaid wishes it wasn't wicked to wish that one was dead.

There is a general delusion likewise, in these lower regions, on the subject of time; everybody conceiving that it ought to be, at the earliest, ten o'clock at night, whereas it is not yet three in the afternoon. A shadowy idea of wickedness committed, haunts every individual in the party; and each one secretly thinks the other a companion in guilt, whom it would be agreeable to avoid. No man or woman has the hardihood to hint at the projected visit to the play. Any one reviving the notion of the ball, would be scouted as a malignant idiot.

Mrs. Skewton sleeps up-stairs, two hours afterwards, and naps are not yet over in the kitchen. The hatchments in the dining-room look down on crumbs, dirty plates, spillings of wine, half-thawed ice, stale discoloured heel-taps, scraps of lobster, drumsticks of fowls, and pensive jellies, gradually resolving themselves into a lukewarm gummy soup. The marriage is, by this time, almost as denuded of its show and garnish as the

breakfast. Mr. Dombey's servants moralise so much about it, and are so repentant over their early tea, at home, that by eight o'clock or so, they settle down into confirmed seriousness; and Mr. Perch, arriving at that time from the city, fresh and jocular, with a white waistcoat and a comic song, ready to spend the evening, and prepared for any amount of dissipation, is amazed to find himself coldly received, and Mrs. Perch but poorly, and to have the pleasing duty of escorting that lady home by the next omnibus.

Night closes in. Florence, having rambled through the handsome house, from room to room, seeks her own chamber, where the care of Edith has surrounded her with luxuries and comforts; and divesting herself of her handsome dress, puts on her old simple mourning for dear Paul, and sits down to read, with Diogenes winking and blinking on the ground beside her. But Florence cannot read to-night. The house seems strange and new, and there are loud echoes in it. There is a shadow on her heart: she knows not why or what: but it is heavy. Florence shuts her book, and gruff Diogenes, who takes that for a signal, puts his paws upon her lap, and rubs his ears against her caressing hands. But Florence cannot see him plainly, in a little time, for there is a mist between her eyes and him, and her dead brother and dead mother shine in it like angels. Walter, too, poor wandering shipwrecked boy, oh, where is he!

The Major don't know; that's for certain; and don't care. The Major, having choked and slumbered, all the afternoon, has taken a late dinner at his club, and now sits over his pint of wine, driving a modest young man, with a fresh-coloured face, at the next table (who would give a handsome sum to be able to rise and go away, but cannot do it) to the verge of madness, by anecdotes of Bagstock, Sir, at Dombey's wedding, and Old Joe's devilish gentlemanly friend, Lord Feenix. While Cousin Feenix, who ought to be at Long's, and in bed, finds himself, instead, at a gaming-table, where his wilful legs have taken him, perhaps, in his own despite.

Night, like a giant, fills the church, from pavement to roof, and holds dominion through the silent hours. Pale dawn again comes peeping through the windows; and, giving place to day, sees night withdraw into the vaults, and follows it, and drives it out, and hides among the dead. The timid mice again cower close together, when the great door clashes, and Mr. Sownds and Mrs. Miff, treading the circle of their daily lives, unbroken as a marriage ring, come in. Again, the cocked hat and the mortified bonnet stand in the back ground at the marriage hour; and again this man taketh this woman, and this woman taketh this man, on the solemn terms:

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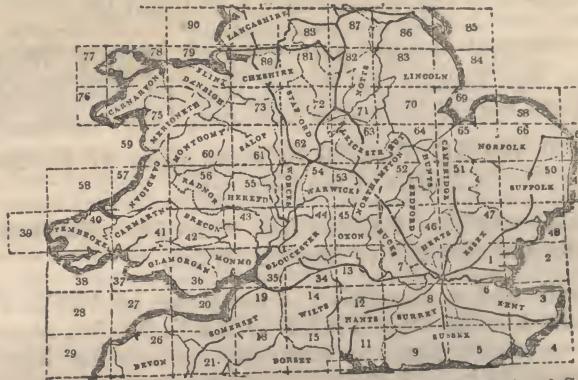
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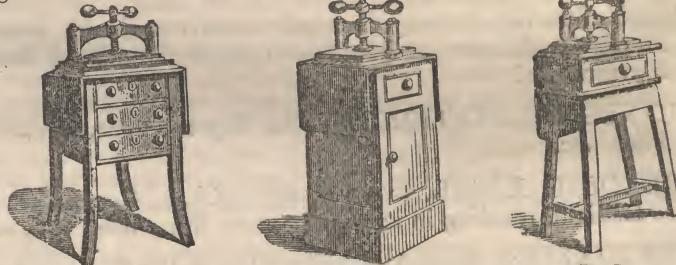
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ESSENTIAL CAUTION.—E. Moses and SON are under the necessity of guarding the public against imposition, having learned that the untradesmanlike falsehood of "Being connected with them," or "It's the same concern," has been resorted to in many instances and for obvious reasons. The Proprietors have no connection with any other house, and those who would prevent disappointment should observe the address,

E. MOSES & SON, Tailors, Woollen Drapers, Hosiery, Furriers, Hatters, Boot and Shoe Makers, and General Outfitters for Ladies and Gentlemen.

154, 155, 156, & 157 Minories, & 83, 84, 85, & 86 Aldgate, City, London.